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E U R O P O S

Crossroads of Antiquity

EDITED BY LISA R. BRODY AND GAIL L. HOFFMAN

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- in 597. After the Roman withdrawal, the site became a Saxon settlement.
- 48 Comparisons made by James, *Arms and Armour*, no. 86. Richborough Site Museum, see Joscelyn P. Bushe-Fox, *Fourth Report on the Excavations of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1949), 148, no. 228, pl. LIV.
- 49 Oldenstein, no. 929, pp. 203–7, 273; and Frisch and Toll, 27, no. 69.
- 50 Richborough Site Museum; see Bushe-Fox, no. 151, p. 133, pl. XL.
- 51 Oldenstein, 203–7.
- 52 For the most recent thinking on features of Continental manufacture see Laing, “Roman Origins of Celtic Christian Art,” 156.
- 53 MacGregor, 188, says “local manufacture is assured... The similarity of the better mounts to more purely native work in Britain is confusing, until one realizes that a common ancestry must be responsible. After all, the anonymous craftsmen working under the pseudonym of ‘Gemellianus’ were merely converting their La Tène traditions to new markets, a conversion quickly emulated by their British brothers.”
- 54 British Museum, P and E 2005, 12–4.1; Mike Pitts and Sally Worrell, “Dish Fit for the Gods,” *British Archaeology* 73 (2003): 22–27; and “Hadrian’s Wall Names on Staffordshire Pan,” *Current Archaeology* 188 (2003): 324–25.
- 55 The author thanks Simon James for bringing this to her attention. The turret is no. 26a at High Brunton. For discussion see Lindsey Allason-Jones, “Small Finds from Turrets on Hadrian’s Wall,” in *Military Equipment and*

the Identity of Roman Soldiers; Proceedings of the Fourth Military Equipment Conference, ed. J. C. N. Coulston, *British Archaeological Reports International Series*, no. 394 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), 204, no. 17, fig. 2, no. 26a.17; 220. For discussion of the workshops, see Jürgen Oldenstein, “Manufacture and Supply of the Roman Army with Bronze Fittings,” in *The Production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment: Proceedings from the Second Roman Military Equipment Research Seminar*, ed. M. C. Bishop (Oxford: B.A.R., 1985), 82–94.

- 56 Joanna Close-Brooks, “Excavations at Clatchard Craig, Fife,” in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 116 (1986): 169–70, fig. 123.
- 57 Paul Bidwell and Stephen Speak, *Excavations at South Shields Roman Fort* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Eng.: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne with Tyne and Wear Museums, 1994), 1:14.
- 58 There has been much discussion of the etymology of the name Arbeia; see David L. Kennedy, “The Place-name Arbeia,” *Britannia* 17 (1986): 332–33; Nick Hodgson, “The Roman Place Names Arbeia and Corstopitum: Recently Suggested Meanings,” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 30 (2002): 173–74; Andrew Breeze, “The Roman Place Names Arbeia and Corstopitum: a Reply,” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 33 (2004): 61–64; and Nick Hodgson, “The Roman Place Names Arbeia and Corstopitum: a Response,” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 34 (2005): 151–52.
- 59 Simon James brought to the author’s attention the discussion of British recruits in Germania by Pat Southern, “The Numeri of the Roman Imperial Army,” *Britannia* 20 (1989): 81–140, esp. 97, 120–22, 132–34.
- 60 Suggestion of Simon James in correspondence. The author extends thanks to James for comments on a draft of this essay.

SIMON JAMES

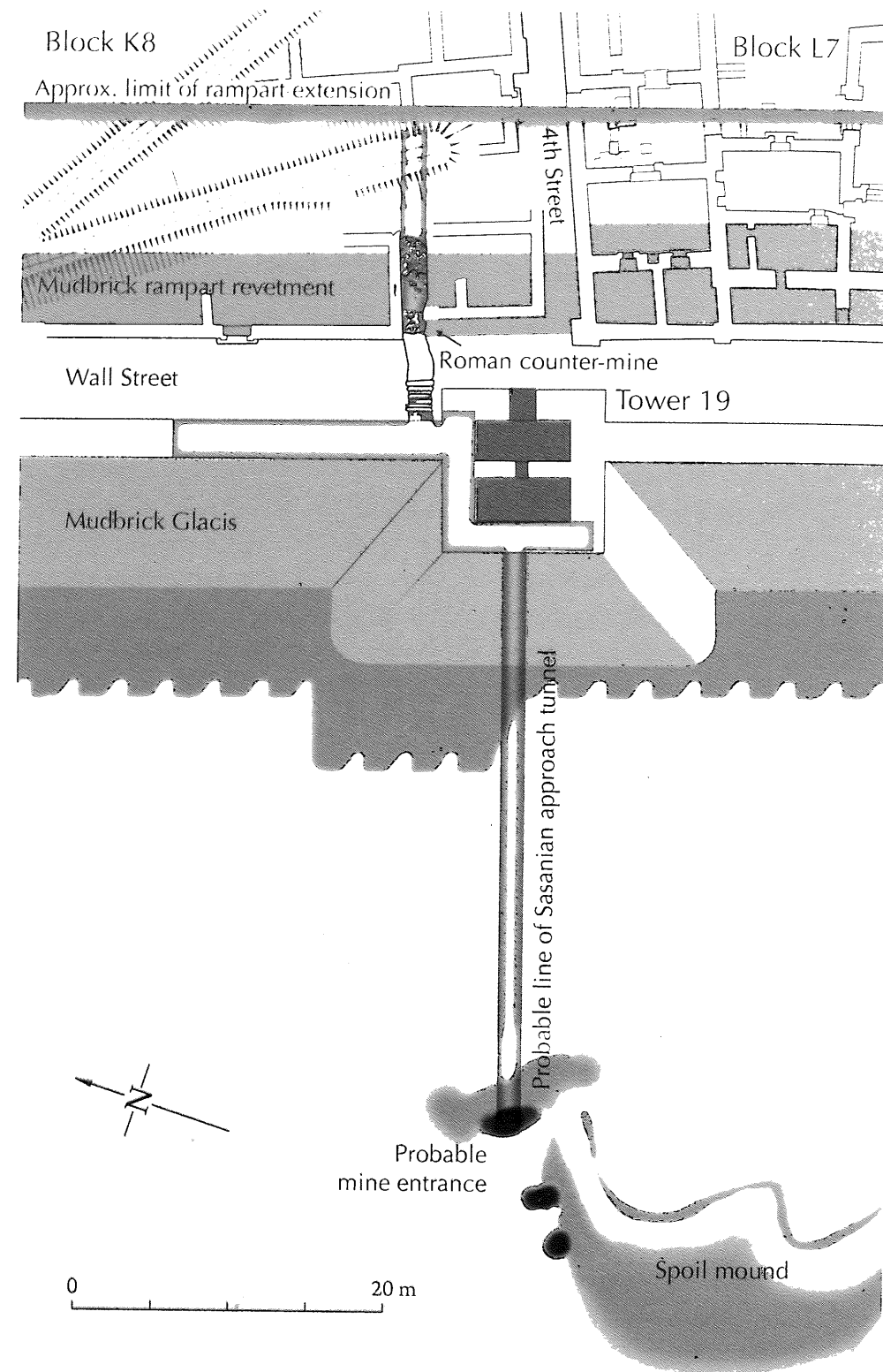
DARK SECRETS OF THE ARCHIVE: EVIDENCE FOR “CHEMICAL WARFARE” AND MARTIAL CONVERGENCES IN THE SIEGE-MINES OF DURA-EUROPOS

Between the World Wars, the Yale-French excavations at Dura-Europos revealed an astonishing picture of the military capability of the armies of Rome and the early Sasanian Empire (known as Persia to the Romans and Iran to the Sasanians themselves). In or around 256 CE, a major Sasanian force attacked Dura, intent on eliminating this forward Roman stronghold blocking the Euphrates valley route from Iran’s rich core territory of Babylonia to the great cities of Syria, which were correspondingly important to Rome. The bitter contest that ensued left many remarkable archaeological remains, explored during the Yale-French excavations and now investigated further by the current Franco-Syrian expedition.¹

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence lay in a complex of siege mines beneath Tower 19 on the western defenses (fig. 18.1).² Here, the bodies of about twenty soldiers found entombed in a tunnel offer gruesome testimony to the ferocity of the fighting and constitute some of the most vivid evidence ever discovered for the archaeology of battle.³ The full significance of what had been revealed was not realized at the time of excavation. Recent work in the archive of the expedition at the Yale University Art Gallery suggests that the excavation records have been holding further secrets, doubly buried, so to speak—first for almost seven centuries in the earth, then for another lifetime in original notes and drawings as well as the artifacts recovered from among the bones of the dead. One of these hitherto hidden secrets is dark indeed, a further macabre twist to what is already evidently a tale of horror; it seems that as they strove to take the city, the Sasanians waged chemical warfare in these gloomy galleries.⁴

Other clues, encoded in the arms and equipment of the victims, have almost paradoxical implications. Dura ultimately fell to the Sasanian onslaught to be devastated and depopulated probably by massacre and biblical-style deportation.⁵ Caught between colliding empires, the city was crushed like a grape. The remains recovered from the mines at Tower 19 attest not only conflict and destruction but also something more subtle and perhaps equally important; even as they waged ferocious wars for mastery of the Middle East, Romans and Sasanians exerted profound mutual influences. In martial affairs, as in other fields of cultural expression from art and court ceremonial to religion, the two empires imitated and reshaped each other in an encounter that was something more than just a prolonged titanic duel.

Figure 18.1: Plan of the mines at Tower 19, based on plans and aerial photographs in the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery (graphic by the author)



The colony of Europos (Dura to local Aramaic-speakers) was founded by Macedonian Greek soldiers after the death of Alexander. Five centuries later it was officially a Roman provincial city. Its walls enclosed a multiethnic civil community in the south and center of the town and a substantial garrison of imperial legionaries and auxiliaries dwelling mostly in the northern quarter, which was turned into a formal military cantonment.⁶ In the early years of the third century CE, Dura, perched above the river, was military headquarters for much of the Middle Euphrates district and a forward base for operations against the ailing Parthian Empire, which repeated Roman aggressions failed to conquer but caused to collapse. In a catastrophic example of "imperial blowback," Rome inadvertently helped precipitate replacement of a relatively benign neighbor by a far more dangerous foe. The Sasanids, a ruling family of Fars (Persis) in Iran, overthrew their Parthian overlords, the Arsacid dynasty, and established a new empire centered in what is now Iraq and Iran.⁷

From the 220s CE onward, Durene civilians and soldiers found themselves caught in the middle of the first clashes between Rome and the new Sasanian Empire. Instead of a base for further conquests, Dura was now an exposed forward stronghold in an era when Sasanian armies sought to invade Roman Syria and even took Antioch. Dura seems to have been held briefly by the Sasanians in the early 250s but was back in Roman hands in 254; the garrison then commenced major operations to turn a walled town into a fortress, anticipating Sasanian attempts to eliminate the Roman presence once and for all.⁸ Steep slopes and cliffs protected the city on three sides. On the west, the part-stone, part-mudbrick city walls faced a flat dry-steppe plain and were vulnerable to attack (see plan, p. 15). The Romans greatly strengthened their 0.8-kilometer course with a steeply sloped mudbrick *glacis* to the front and a huge mudbrick and earthen rampart behind (fig. 18.10: ii, iii). Designed to absorb battering rams and shore the walls against undermining, these were drastic expedients involving destruction of a great swathe of the interior (while paradoxically also ensuring preservation of many of the city's greatest treasures for modern archaeology to reveal). The rampart entombed large portions of houses, temples, a synagogue, and a Christian building; its slope protected wall paintings and many fragile artifacts from the winter rains for almost seventeen centuries. It also preserved the grim secrets of the siege mines of Tower 19.

Around 256, the expected Sasanian onslaught began. Recent work has identified the vast Sasanian siege-camp to the west of Dura, bigger than the city itself.⁹ From here, the invaders launched a series of attacks against the western defenses and doubtless against the eastern River Gate, which was subsequently lost to the Euphrates. The surviv-



Figure 18.2: Robert du Mesnil du Buisson at the junction of the Roman counter-mine with the Sasanian sap into which the city wall has slumped. The Roman tunnel is still partly filled with the stones dumped in it by the Persians. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

ing siegeworks were explored in the 1930s by the soldier and aristocrat Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, a major figure in the Yale-French mission (fig. 18.2). Du Mesnil's explorations have been renewed by another Frenchman, Pierre Leriche, co-director of the current Franco-Syrian mission. Having previously excavated remains of another assault on the great Palmyrene Gate, at the time of writing he is making important new discoveries at the site of the great Sasanian siege ramp toward the southern end of the western wall that go far beyond the pioneering work of Du Mesnil.¹⁰ It seems the Romans managed to thwart both these attacks, but they faced others, probably simultaneously, in an onslaught that evidently lasted weeks and probably several terror-filled months.

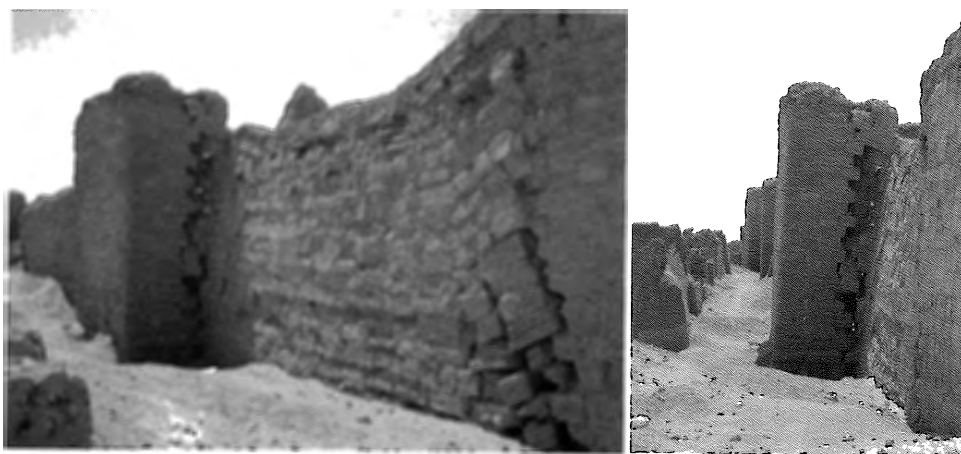


Figure 18.3: Damage to the city wall and Tower 19, as seen in 2008. The undermined stretch of wall came "unzipped" at each end and sank into the ground, as did two walls of Tower 19. These were kept upright by the earth rampart that then enshrouded them, which was removed by Du Mesnil during the excavations (photograph by the author)

neither studied nor preserved.¹² While by modern standards Du Mesnil's techniques leave much to be desired, they rate better than many others of his time, his observations and recording proving good enough to permit the reinterpretations offered here.

The Sasanian tactics at Tower 19 can be discerned clearly. They intended to "sap" (undermine) a substantial stretch of city wall and topple it to create a breach wide enough for a column of troops to charge into the city from the Sasanian lines across the plain. To minimize casualties as they rushed toward the breach, they would bring down the adjacent tower to their right, which would otherwise be used to enfilade them by pouring onto their unshielded right sides iron-tipped arrows, catapult bolts (pl. 6), artillery stones, javelins, and hand-thrown rocks.

Ideally, mining should have been undetected, aiding attack with the element of surprise. Its violent outcome would have been a paralyzing shock to the defenders. But the flatness of the plain before the walls of Dura made concealment impossible. The entrance to the mine has not been identified certainly, although the excavators noted a substantial pile of debris probably from the Sasanian approach tunnel, which likely

Another major operation, roughly 150 meters north of the Palmyrene Gate, was the effort to undermine Tower 19 and a stretch of city wall on its north side. Du Mesnil excavated the remains during the sixth and seventh seasons, from December 1932 through 1933.¹¹ Today, the effects of the Sasanian assault are plainly visible in the slumped city wall and shattered tower (fig. 18.3), but little is now to be seen of the mines themselves. To understand these, we rely on Du Mesnil's records and publications and surviving artifacts from the tunnels. Sadly, the skeletons were

commenced in one of the many chamber-tombs of the extramural cemetery to the west of the city. The Sasanian miners approached the walls through the soft gypsum strata beneath the very hard, meter-thick limestone surface-layer of the plain. In an impressive feat of surveying and engineering skill, they then punched up through the limestone to begin removing the lower courses of wall and tower, replacing these with wooden props to be set alight later (fig. 18.11: iv, right).

To the detriment of the Sasanians' plan, the Romans could see the piles of earth being thrown up. Expert engineers soon located the approaching tunnel, probably by listening for the sound of digging. They mounted the standard response recommended by Greco-Roman military engineers: a countermine to intercept the enemy gallery and disrupt the attack. They realized that the Sasanians were removing the lower part of the stone wall encased in their rampart, so they drove through this a horizontal tunnel shored with timber to hold the loose earthen overburden toward the growing Persian gallery (fig. 18.11: iv, left). When on the point of breaking through, the Romans assembled an assault party in their tunnel (fig. 18.11: v). Within minutes, many of these men were dead.

Much of what ensued in the struggle for the mines at Tower 19 is clear enough. The Romans were worsted: about twenty of them ended up within their own tunnel a tangled mass of bones, shields, armor, and other identifiably Roman equipment and coins in a space barely 2 meters long and 1.5 meters wide (fig. 18.4). A few meters away, on the attackers' side, lay a solitary body, still wearing his mail shirt (fig. 18.5), with a plainly non-Roman helmet (pl. 13; discussed below) and a shattered sword with a Central Asiatic jade pommel near where his feet had been; this is surely one of the Sasanian attackers.¹³ The area between this Sasanian and the Roman corpses had been burned heavily. The Sasanians had evidently captured the Roman tunnel and burned its middle

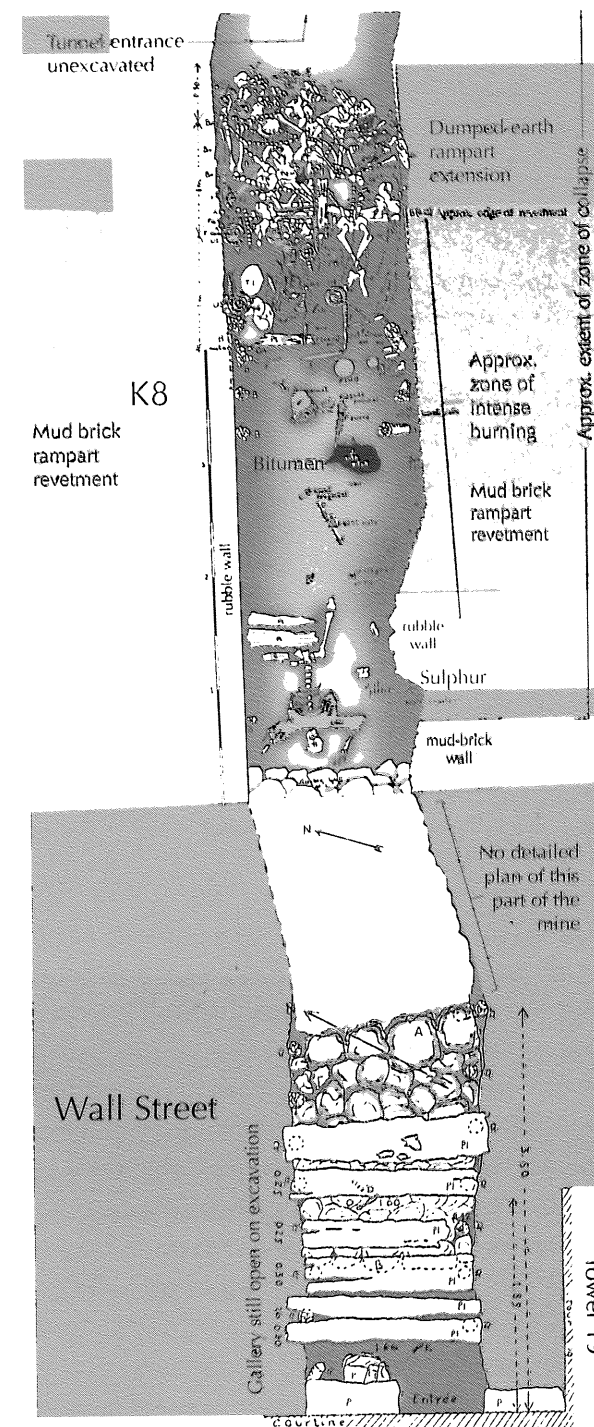


Figure 18.4: Plan of the Roman countermine and its discoveries. Based on Du Mesnil's published drawings and manuscript (composite plan by the author)



Figure 18.5: The skeleton of a Sasanian soldier on the floor of the Roman countermine. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

The murderous struggle for the walls at Tower 19 ended then in a costly tactical victory for the battered defenders. This local success did not prevent the eventual fall of the city, for it is evident that the defenses were subsequently penetrated elsewhere. In 2005, a row of artillery bolt heads was found on the perimeter of the Roman military base, indicating the position of a catapult set up by the defenders preparing for a last stand in the streets and buildings they called home.¹⁵ Unpublished records in the Dura-Europos archive at Yale show that in Block E8 (civil houses turned into barracks), the excavators found a couple of victims of house-to-house fighting still lying on the floors of the rooms in which they were killed.¹⁶ A number of buildings showed traces of the fires that broke out, or were set, during a chaotic sack.

The remarkable story of the final siege of Dura, which can be told in such vivid detail, is reconstructed entirely from archaeological evidence; no written historical account

portion, collapsing the roof to stop further Roman interference. They then resumed their undermining, making good use of the still-open stretch of Roman tunnel adjacent to their own works as a convenient dump for the stones from the city wall, even mortaring them together to hinder any renewed Roman countermining (figs. 18.2, 18.4, 18.12: viii). But the Romans did not try again.

Without further interruption, the Sasanians were able to finish undermining Tower 19 and the adjacent stretch of curtain wall. They then piled inflammables around the posts holding up tower and curtain wall and set their fire. But their mine failed (fig. 18.12: ix). The curtain did not, as intended, pitch outward to create a gap for the assault party waiting out on the plain; rather, it sank vertically in the ground but remained upright (fig. 18.3). There was no practicable breach; the mudbrick glacis and rampart had done their job, and the attackers were thwarted. Tower 19 was effectively knocked out as a fighting platform, but this achieved little. The slumping of two of its outer walls precipitated the collapse of its interior floors, preserving between them several of Dura's most important military treasures: a painted rectangular wooden shield (pl. 5) as well as two intact sets of scale horse-armor (fig. 18.6) and the disintegrated remains of another.¹⁴



Figure 18.6: One of the perfectly preserved sets of Roman horse-armor found in Tower 19, photographed on the back of a horse at the time of discovery (armor: 1933.680) Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

survives. It nevertheless is incomplete in a number of respects, most notably that we remain unsure how the Sasanians eventually broke into the city. There is also something of a mystery about exactly what happened in the Roman countermine.

Du Mesnil's vivid description of his excavation around Tower 19 has been of double interest to me as a Roman military archaeologist specializing in the study of weapons and of warfare (Dura-Europos offers much of the best evidence ever found for both).¹⁷ One question has always nagged me, ever since I first read about the discoveries: how did some twenty Roman soldiers, complete with their equipment, become entombed in such a tiny space within their own mine?

As we saw, Du Mesnil believed that when the tunnels met the Romans were defeated by the Sasanians, who captured their countermine. This clearly is correct, but his explanation for how so many Romans were killed and how they ended up where they were found has never sounded very convincing to me. He argued that in hand-to-hand fighting the Romans were driven back, causing officers outside the countermine to panic that the Persians would follow the retreating defenders into the city through the Roman tunnel. So they ordered its entrance collapsed. This desperate measure stopped the Sasanians and trapped many Romans still inside. They huddled together by the fallen entrance, seated, crouching, or standing, while the Sasanians set the adjacent stretch of tunnel alight using sulphur and bitumen as accelerants: crystals of the first and a broken jar of the second were found on the floor (fig. 18.4). Overcome by fumes and flames, the Romans collapsed where they stood. The resulting tangle of corpses was partly incinerated.¹⁸

This is a dramatic and horrifying reconstruction. Yet it does not ring true. The tunnel was narrow, and armed attackers could have issued from it only one at a time. How dangerous was that to forewarned, assembled defenders? And would twenty desperate Romans really have stood passively watching their foes set light to the mine, when their only chance for life was to stop them? Du Mesnil's account makes no sense. Careful study of his drawings of the tangle of bodies (no photographs survive) suggests a wholly different, but equally horrific, sequence of events.

Du Mesnil offered no detailed overall plan of the countermine, and the various drawings of parts of the complex he did publish are hard to relate together.¹⁹ Close study of elements appearing in more than one image allows their original relationships to be re-established and many details of the three-dimensional conformation of the body-pile to be teased out (fig. 18.7).²⁰ Examination of the disposition of the lowest layer of bodies shows that several individuals were seated against the sides of the tunnel, as Du Mesnil noted, but their legs were stretched across it, not contracted—hardly plausible if others were standing over them when the smoke and flame reached them (fig. 18.7: bodies 6, 7, 10). The upper bodies had not collapsed from a standing position at all: some lay stretched right across the tunnel over the lowermost corpses (fig. 18.7: bodies 4, 8, 13, 14); they clearly had been lain there deliberately by others. We can reconstruct in detail the sequence of stacking. First, individuals were placed sitting up against the walls. Then, others were laid over them across the tunnel. Finally, more were placed leaning against the face of the growing pile, from the Sasanian side. Subsequently some of these last positioned bodies were almost entirely burned away. When excavated, they were attested only by remains of the iron mail shirts that had encased their torsos (fig. 18.7:

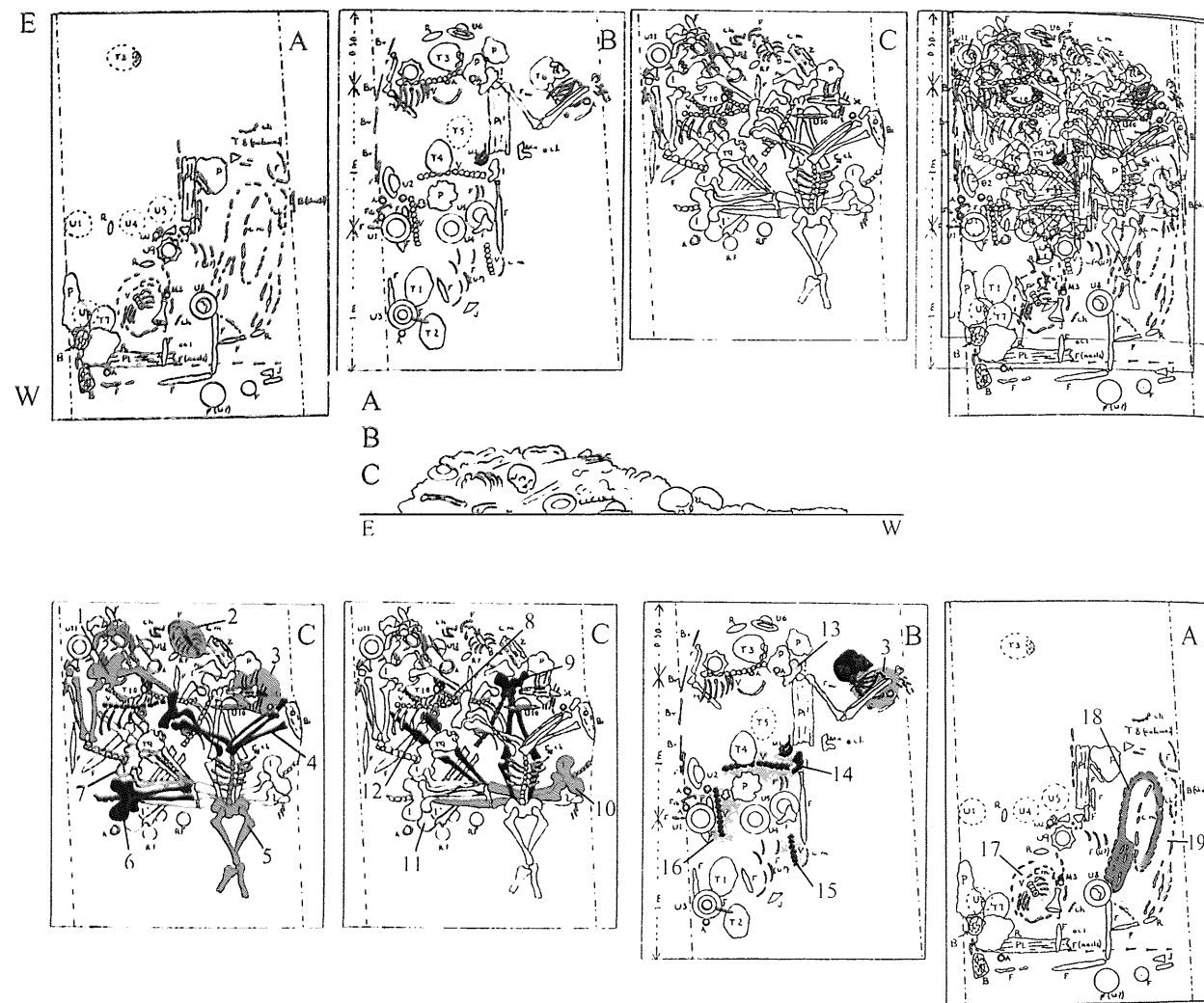


Figure 18.7: Du Mesnil's drawings of the body stack (top, A–C) reflect how he excavated it (center). They permit us to identify the number and disposition of bodies (bottom row) and to reconstruct the compressed mass (top right) (graphic by the author)

bodies 18, 19). This is then not a pile of dead who had expired where they were found; it is a deliberately constructed stack of bodies created by the attackers.

The deliberate stacking of Roman dead by the Sasanians implies a sequence of events quite different from that postulated by Du Mesnil. When the Romans were defeated underground, their officers did not collapse the mouth of their own tunnel and probably had no means of doing so at such short notice; rather, it remained open, exposing the Sasanians to immediate danger of Roman counterattack before the former could destroy the countermine. They now controlled a tunnel littered with dead or incapacitated Romans. With brutal practicality matching that of the Romans, the Sasanians turned these obstacles into a resource.

They dragged the bodies closer to the tunnel entrance and piled them into a wall (fig. 18.11: vi) to hinder any further Roman attack and thwart another known siege tactic: shooting catapult bolts along mine galleries.²¹ The Sasanians employed the Roman casualties as "organic sandbags,"²² while they set fire to the middle section of the countermine (figs. 18.11: vi; 18.12: vii).

This new explanation raises a further question with an even more macabre probable answer: if the Roman soldiers perished not as a result of the fire but had already been killed, or at least incapacitated, before their bodies were stacked and the fire set, how did they meet their fate?

Du Mesnil thought the Romans had been defeated by the Sasanians in desperate hand-to-hand combat in the dark tunnels and were forced to retreat to the point where they were found. If these Roman soldiers perished not as a result of the mine entrance being collapsed before they could escape, how did the Sasanians manage to kill twenty of them in a space barely tall enough to stand in upright, narrow enough to touch both walls at the same time, and only about 10 meters long? This suggests superhuman close-combat abilities—or some quite different agency.

In seeking an alternative explanation for this massacre, my first hypothesis was that it was a terrible accident. In the hot, dark tunnel, lit only by oil lamps, once the mines met and fighting broke out, men at the back pushed forward, while those at the front, meeting ferocious resistance, tried to recoil. In the confined space, crowd crush could soon incapacitate or kill many by asphyxiation or trampling (as modern accidents at football stadia and religious gatherings have shown). At a presentation of this provisional asphyxiation-through-crowd-crush hypothesis, the ancient historian Kate Gilliver suggested that smoke, rather than crushing, could have been the cause. Surviving historical texts reveal that centuries earlier the Greeks developed simple fume generators to literally smoke out enemy siege-miners using pungent materials like burning feathers.²³ This historical information provided, in my view, the final piece of the archaeological puzzle. The Romans caught in the tunnel by Tower 19 had been gassed. We can even identify the chemical agents used.

Here is what I believe happened: Just as the Romans detected the approaching mine, the Sasanian sappers heard the approaching Roman tunnellers with enough time to plan a riposte. They prepared a very nasty surprise for the Romans, and it worked perfectly. Probably in their own approach tunnel, at a level lower than the Roman countermine, they set up a brazier of hot charcoal. As the Romans broke through into the prop-filled void under the city wall, the Sasanians retreated behind their brazier and threw onto it some of the bitumen and sulphur crystals we know they had because, probably only minutes later, they used them to set fire to the Roman tunnel. These materials would have produced dense clouds of hot fumes—a deadly cocktail of oily hydrocarbon smoke, carbon monoxide, and the even nastier sulphur dioxide gas. The last, when inhaled, combines with water in the mucus of nose and lungs to create sulphurous acid.²⁴

The Sasanian engineers probably actively pumped these fumes into the Roman tunnel with bellows, the documented technique, but may not have needed to do so. Once the low-level Sasanian tunnel was connected to the higher Roman gallery, a natural chimney effect would have drawn the hot gasses into the latter. Perhaps the air-current was magnified by the prevailing westerly winds which often buffet the city (fig. 18.11: v). Either way, the foremost members of the Roman assault party would have found themselves engulfed in total oily blackness and, seconds later, choking their lives out as sulphurous acid burned their eyes, throats, and lungs. Men were probably already collapsing into unconsciousness at the front of the party

before the smoke reached those further back; only the hindmost were able to turn and stagger choking out of the tunnel, pursued, it must have seemed, by the sulphurous clouds of Hell billowing from the entrance (fig. 18.11: vi). Whether or not they understood what was happening, it is no wonder the Romans outside hesitated to re-enter their tunnel.

Down in their approach mine, the Sasanians simply had to keep the smoke going until the noises in the gallery above stopped. Capping or dousing their brazier, they waited briefly for the worst of the fumes to blow on through the mines and out into the city, then entered the Roman gallery, now littered with dead and incapacitated men. They began systematically dragging the bodies toward the entrance and piling them, some perhaps still alive, into a blocking wall. As the floor was cleared, they prepared and started the fire, using more bitumen and sulphur this time as accelerants to make it flare rapidly into an unquenchable inferno and collapse the middle section of the Roman gallery.²⁵ It seems that at this point the Sasanians suffered a loss.

The isolated body found on the Sasanian side of the seat of the fire in the countermines was one of the attackers, probably someone of some importance given the fineness of his arms, perhaps leader of the Sasanian mine-fighting detail. Whoever he was, I believe he was the man who started the fire after his comrades had cleared the area. Perhaps he was injured already or just lingered too long to ensure the fire was alight and was overcome accidentally by the same fumes that had recently killed the Romans. He was destined to share a tomb with them, since the falling roof evidently prevented his comrades from recovering his body, when they resumed their undermining of the wall.

If correct—and it seems the best explanation of all the available evidence—this new reconstruction of the dramatic struggle in the dark beneath Tower 19 constitutes the earliest-known archaeological testimony for deliberate use of agents in the form of gas or vapor to incapacitate or kill enemy personnel: what we today call chemical warfare.²⁶

In itself, encountering such siege tactics in the third century CE is actually no surprise to ancient military historians, since, as was mentioned above, written accounts record the use of noxious smoke in the Classical world several centuries earlier. The Romans, masters of military engineering, maintained and further developed the sophisticated Hellenistic tradition of *poliorcetics* (siege warfare). Especially interesting is that at Dura it seems poisonous smoke was being used—and with devastating expertise—not by Romans but by Sasanians.

The Parthians apparently had no significant siege capability, focusing instead on mobile equestrian warfare (horse archers and armored lancers) largely developed on the central Asiatic grass steppe, a military tradition suited to the arid plains of the Middle East. The Sasanians continued to place great ideological emphasis on mounted combat, and the Roman sources through which we first came to see them likewise focused on this continuity from Parthian times. Greco-Roman ideological attitudes tended to represent Iranians as timeless barbarians. They were just more Parthians or throwbacks to the Achaemenid Persians whom Alexander had conquered. These factors made it hard for Romans to think of the Sasanians as anything fundamentally different in kind from what had gone before—especially when Sasanian discourse,

imagery, and propaganda emphasised traditional themes. For example, the first Sasanid king, Ardashir I, was represented on coins in the Parthian royal crown, while early Sasanid art foregrounded Parthian-style heavy cavalry warfare. Most crucially, Romans believed, or at least claimed, that the Sasanid regime was bent on reconquest of the old Achaemenid Empire in the west; true or not, it allowed Romans to see Sasanians as a revival of ancient Persia rather than as something new.²⁷ Modern scholarship long contemplated Roman-Sasanian interactions far more through Classical than Iranian eyes, in part simply because much more evidence exists for the Roman side. Perceptions of these interactions were filtered further by modern scholarship's own colonialist and Orientalist cultural context. It is unsurprising, therefore, that we too have long tended to see the Sasanians in military terms just as more aggressive and effective Parthians, not really as anything potentially new or different.

The archaeological testimony of Dura-Europos gives us a major direct insight into the capabilities of an early Sasanian army at war undistorted by either Sasanid royal propaganda or that of Greco-Roman historians. Even leaving aside for a moment the question of gas warfare, my colleague Pierre Leriche, an expert on ancient city defenses, has long argued that the multiple, complex, sophisticated, and well-executed siege-works documented at Dura, and the ultimate success of the Sasanians, show that already in the 250s they had mastered the full spectrum of state-of-the-art Greco-Roman *poliorcetics*.²⁸ Against this background, it becomes almost expected that they would have known how to use fume generators as a tool of mine fighting. There are other clues that they had mastered siege warfare even earlier than this: about fifteen years before they attacked Dura, the Sasanians had taken the powerful Arab city of Hatra in northern Mesopotamia, which, remarkably, had several times defied sieges waged by Roman armies led by emperors themselves.²⁹

What was the source of this apparently rapidly established new siege capability for Iranian armies? This is fairly easy to understand. Written accounts and living expertise were available. For example, the Sasanian Empire incorporated Greek communities, notably the great city of Seleucia on the Tigris, which lay close to its capital, Ctesiphon, while early Sasanian kings remained, like the Arsacids, fairly philhellenic. These enclaves, if not active centers of Classical military expertise, could have provided channels for transmission of Greek military writings: histories of wars and military handbooks that describe in detail such techniques as the use of smoke generators in mines.

Perhaps of more immediate relevance may have been the composition of Sasanian armies. Like those of many imperial systems, including the Roman and recent British Empires, Sasanian field armies included contingents levied from subject peoples and even usefully warlike foreigners and enemies. Multiethnic recruitment turned the peculiar expertise of the varied national contingents to imperial benefit.³⁰ It is also clear that from the outset the Sasanians captured large numbers of Roman provincial troops and doubtless recruited some through coercion or incentive. Others are recorded to have defected as exiles or willing renegades; the distinctions are often a matter of perspective. The history of Roman and Partho-Sasanian relations records numerous instances of soldiers, including officers, crossing from one empire to serve in the other.³¹ In these ways, contemporary Roman engineering expertise could pass directly into Sasanian service, just as Roman-style architecture and art was created in Mesopotamia by deported provincial civilians during the same period.³²

We can, then, glimpse the “how”; the “why” may also be discerned clearly. The Sasanians were acutely aware that the Romans repeatedly had invaded Parthian Mesopotamia and several times besieged and taken

the royal capital, Ctesiphon, and the nearby Greek metropolis of Seleucia on the Tigris. To take on the Romans, acquiring siege capabilities of their own would have greatly enhanced Sasanian military potential, as events demonstrated. The military system they rapidly developed in the third century was so formidable, both in open-field battle and set-piece sieges, that it nearly broke Rome's grip on the East, forcing profound restructuring of the entire imperial system and its armies.³³ Instead of asking how and why the Sasanians developed siege expertise so rapidly, the more pertinent question is why did the Parthians, who repeatedly suffered the effects of Roman sieges in the heart of their empire, apparently fail to do so? Were they somehow incapable of the change or did they even actively avoid it perhaps for ideological reasons? Or is this another illusion, fostered by huge gaps and distortions in our evidence?

If early Sasanian skill at Greco-Roman-style siege warfare is evident in the engineering works they created at Dura-Europos, then other equally significant testimony for martial exchanges across the Euphrates may be found among the remains of the carnage around Tower 19. Of particular interest is the isolated body in the middle of the Roman mine, plausibly believed to have been the owner of the remarkable iron helmet and jade-pommeled sword found nearby (fig. 18.4). It was argued above that this was the Sasanian who started the fire; he had set down his encumbering helmet and sword while he did it. Features of his panoply indicate the far-reaching contacts of the Iranian Empire, not least with Central Asia. His sword was too shattered to recover the form of its blade, but its discoid pommel was of jade, thought to have come from Chinese Turkestan.³⁴ His armor and helmet encode part of another remarkable story—of two-way exchanges in military equipment technology, fashion, and style between the Roman and Partho-Sasanian worlds, which began long before the siege of Dura and continued long after.

The body was clad in iron mail (so-called chain mail, made of interlocking iron rings) in the form of a long-sleeve T-shirt (fig. 18.5).³⁵ Down to incorporation of decorative rows of brass rings, it is virtually identical to the mail shirts worn by the Roman defenders of Dura.³⁶ Its identification as Sasanian rather than Roman depends on the precise context of its discovery (above) and one non-Roman detail of its manufacture: the brassy rings pick out a trident-shaped device on the chest. It resembles the quasi-heraldic badges used in the Sasanian world seen on the helmets and horse-trappers of Sasanid royalty and grandees on the great rock-relief at Firuzabad commemorating the overthrow of the Arsacids.³⁷ These same reliefs also show Sasanid kings in mail shirts of just the kind found on the "Persian" in the Tower 19 mine, suggesting such armor was in widespread use in early Sasanian armies. It seems to be though another recent innovation in the East; the Parthians do not appear to have used mail. Developed some five centuries earlier by the

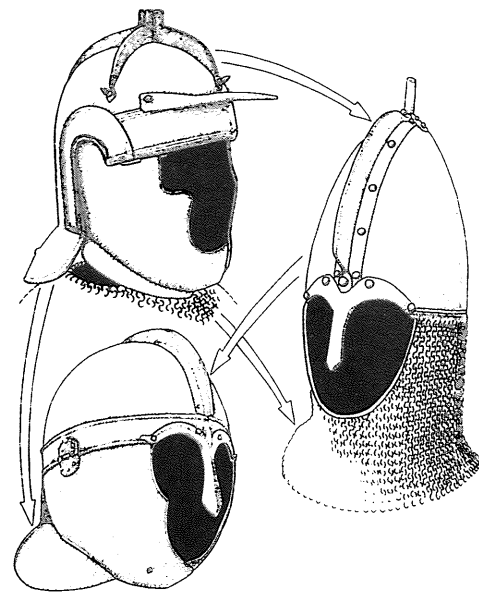


Figure 18.8: Roman helmets and mail (top left) influenced Partho-Sasanian helmets like that from the Dura mines (right), which in turn inspired new fourth-century Roman designs (bottom left) (drawing by the author)

European Gauls,³⁸ the use of mail later spread to the Sarmatian horse-peoples of the Black Sea Steppe.³⁹ The most likely route for it to have entered Sasanian use is, again, via Roman troops, who used mail extensively beginning in the third century BCE. Here are more indications of Roman influences on Sasanian military culture.

The Sasanian's helmet tells a further story (pl. 13; fig. 18.8, right).⁴⁰ If it is compared with contemporary Roman helmets from Dura and elsewhere, it could hardly look more different.⁴¹ Still often made of brass instead of iron, Roman helmets comprised a rounded bowl that followed the shape of the skull. They were made in a single piece with a large projecting neck guard and big plate cheekpieces attached by hinges. This contrasts strongly with the overall appearance and basic structure of the Sasanian helmet from the mine: its iron skull was notably taller than Roman forms, and it was made in two parts joined by a separate strip of iron to which each half was riveted individually. Across the forehead was riveted a T-shape plate and a pair of iron eyebrows anchoring a projecting nose guard (a feature unknown on contemporary Roman examples). It lacked plate protection for the neck or face, having instead a pendant curtain of mail.

The Sasanian helmet from Dura clearly represents a basic approach to helmet-making comprising a tradition quite separate from that of the contemporary Roman world; nevertheless, it has its own remarkable implications for Roman-Sasanian martial interactions. The helmet sports a curved, upstanding metal plate stretching from above the eyes to the apex and fixed to the helmet skull by a large rivet at each end. This, which looks like a supplement to the basic design, closely resembles plates riveted across brow and crown on contemporary Roman helmets, which were intended to absorb the force of blows from sword or axe before they reached the helmet bowl (fig. 18.8, top left). As with the choice of mail for the hanging neck defense, it seems we are dealing with Sasanian adaptation of a Roman idea.

However, it is the principle of this helmet's construction which is of greatest interest to ancient armor specialists, because it provides the answer to a technological puzzle. During the half-century following the fall of Dura—as the Roman Empire battled for survival against Sasanian power in the East and Germanic, especially Gothic, onslaughts in the North—Roman helmet design underwent a total revolution unmatched in other aspects of arms and equipment, which saw incremental change or none. By the early 300s, the established helmet-making tradition—the evolution of which can be traced without a break from the Republic to the fall of Dura—had simply vanished. It had been replaced by a radically different conception of helmet design, now always in iron, in which the helmet skull was made in two halves, each riveted to a separate fore-and-aft strip or ridge-piece.⁴² To the front of this, a T-shape nose guard-with-eyebrows component was often riveted. No third-century source of inspiration was known for this sudden, radically new Roman helmet tradition, which lasted at least into the fifth century; however, an excellent prototype for it had been deposited in the Tower 19 countermines at Dura around 256. This proves that late-Roman helmet design was essentially copied from that encountered in war against the Sasanians at places like Dura.⁴³ Just as the Sasanians adapted Roman mail to their own needs and preferences (e.g., using it on their helmets), the Romans around 300 adapted Sasanian helmet design to their taste, making the overall profile lower and adding plate cheek and neck guards (fig. 18.8, bottom left). The iron helmet that lay in the Tower 19 countermines, at first sight simply an alien intrusion in a Roman environment, in reality exemplifies a continuing interplay of martial culture between two worlds learning and copying from each other even as they fought.

These exchanges are also attested by other treasures deposited as a result of the mining operations, this

time within Tower 19 itself. Between its collapsed floors, along with that iconic imperial Roman military artifact, a curved rectangular shield (pl. 5), lay two complete armored horse trappers and the disintegrated remains of a third.⁴⁴ These trappers, part of the equipment of fully armored lancers or cataphracts (fig.

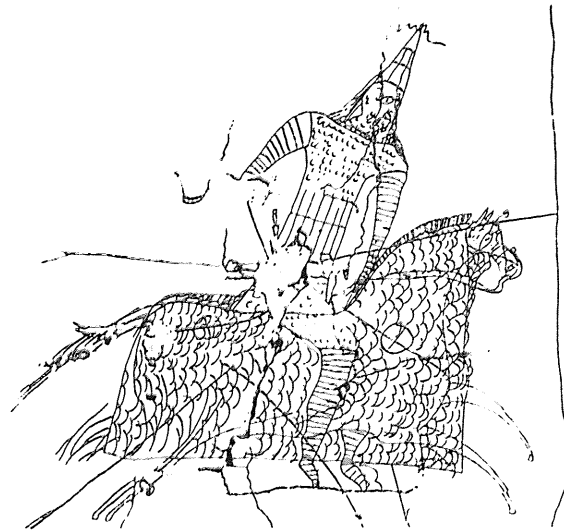


Figure 18.9: Drawing of a graffito of a clibanarius (a fully armored man on an armored horse), Christian Building, ca 200–250 CE (graffito: 1931.608). Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

18.9), certainly belonged to the defenders. While the Romans encountered armored horses in fighting the Sarmatians on the Danube and around the Black Sea, they first encountered cataphracts in Asia as part of Seleucid and then Parthian forces. The Parthians used them to devastating effect against the Romans in combination with large numbers of horse archers, famously annihilating Crassus' army at Carrhae in 53 BCE.⁴⁵ Cataphracts and other super-heavy cavalry called *clibanarii* were components of later Roman armies,⁴⁶ but the horse armor found in Dura demonstrates that the Romans were introducing and experimenting with such units on the Euphrates frontier during the Principate. The Dura trappers may imitate Parthian designs, although the iron and bronze scales of which they are composed represent another standard armor technique long since adopted and naturalized by the Romans for soldiers' cuirasses.

The Romans were even quicker to adopt horse archers, this time demonstrably from southwest Asia in the first instance. Already in the mid-first century CE a mixed unit of Arab and Parthian horse archers was stationed on the Rhine.⁴⁷ Rome did not use horse archers in large numbers in Europe, but they may

have been very widespread in the less well-documented cavalry units on the eastern frontier throughout the early centuries CE.

The evidence of the early horse archers at Mainz, then, shows that Rome already was directly adopting for its own uses aspects of martial culture from the Parthian world within a century at most of contact between the two empires. The Parthians may have been more resistant to adopting Roman ways, as their apparent failure or reluctance to develop siege capability seems to suggest, although we should make the important caveat that this general impression may be in part an illusion fostered by the ideological bias of Greco-Roman accounts, aggravated by lack of detailed archaeological evidence for Parthian weapons and warfare. For as we have seen, it is the archaeological finds made at Dura, siegeworks and artifacts (and not least the exact disposition and interrelations of artifacts in the earth) preserved by the accidents of war and the peculiarities of the site and its environment,⁴⁸ which allow us to say that the Sasanians—whatever their ideology and rhetoric led them to say in public—were in practice strikingly open to adapting ideas from their Roman antagonists. Perhaps one day finds elsewhere may throw equivalent light on the still-shadowy realities of Parthian warfare.

As we saw, we have a fairly good grasp of the routes whereby these cross-frontier exchanges of weapons, techniques, and tactics were affected: observing the enemy in combat, examining battlefield booty, coercing

prisoners of war to serve, or recruiting exiles and so-called exotic troops from frontier zones and beyond.⁴⁹ Through these channels, foreign ways could become part of the general martial culture of a society more or less inadvertently, as contingents serving together bought, borrowed, or stole each others' equipment or ideas. This still happens in modern allied armies.⁵⁰

The motivation to copy allies or enemies, whether on the personal initiative of soldiers or on the orders of commanders, may be intensely practical: *their* weapons or armor or tactics clearly work much better than ours. Hannibal was a better general, and his soldiers made a better army than the Romans he faced in Italy, but Republican legionaries had better individual equipment; the Carthaginian general was quick to re-equip his soldiers with the fine kit he captured from his defeated enemies.⁵¹ But simple utility is rarely the only motivation. As Hannibal looted Roman armor, the ultimately victorious Romans adopted the famous Spanish sword used by his Iberian auxiliaries. This was primarily for the legendary strength and lethality of its blade, but they also carefully maintained the Spanish appearance of its scabbard; it was no functional necessity but evidently was considered an indispensable part of its mystique, advertising the *gladius Hispaniensis* even when sheathed.⁵² Just as important as practicalities in driving copying, then, can be moral impact, associations conjured in the minds of observers of competence and courage, ferocity and fearfulness, of past victories and anticipated glory: military cool.⁵³ More recent well-known examples are the pan-European craze for units of Hussars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the fashion for units equipped like contemporary, elite French colonial Zouaves during the American Civil War. These trends were driven as much by a taste for distinctive, showy uniforms and the associations they evoked as they were for concrete practical reasons. Martial exchanges across the Euphrates in the early centuries CE and a thousand other lines of confrontation have likewise been driven by the burning desire to capture something of the enemy's *élan* as well as to match his weapons and tactics.

While the astonishing and gruesome archaeological testimony of the siege of Dura vividly attests the war-torn history of the Euphrates zone in the Roman and early Sasanian era, it equally provides an excellent illustration of how, far from being peripheries, frontiers can be foci not only of violence but also of intensive technological and cultural interactions, especially in matters highly valued by many ancient societies such as soldiering or warriorhood.⁵⁴ In the third century CE, even as the Roman and Sasanian Empires violently contested the frontier between them, each studied, imitated, and learned from the other, influencing their antagonists' martial culture and identity even as they recreated themselves and each other through war hot and cold. Further, the martial exchanges attested at Dura were just part of a far broader pattern of interaction and convergence between the Partho-Sasanian and Roman-early Byzantine worlds, which unfolded at many levels. It was exhibited not least in the parallel cultures of the imperial courts of neighboring powers, which—when they were not actively fighting each other—in late antiquity came to see themselves as the "two eyes of the world."⁵⁵ The desolate remains of Dura serve as one of the first monuments to a deadly embrace that would last for centuries.

Notes

I would like to thank Lisa R. Brody, Gail L. Hoffman, and Margaret Neeley for the invitation to contribute to the present volume. At Yale University Art Gallery I am as ever grateful to Susan Matheson and Lisa Brody for their sustained assistance in the research on the Dura archive on which the foregoing is based. I also wish to record my thanks to Pierre Leriche and other members of the modern Franco-Syrian mission for discussions of the siegeworks at Dura, and their generous support of my work at the site. It should be noted, however, that Pierre Leriche does not accept the "gassing" hypothesis presented here.

- 1 For discussion of the meaning of terms like "Iran" (which Sasanians applied to, roughly, modern Iran and Iraq plus some neighboring regions), see Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: the Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: Tauris, 2009). For a modern overview of the siege see Pierre Leriche, "Techniques de guerre sassanides et romains à Doura-Europos," in *L'Armée Romaine et les Barbares du IIIe au VIIe siècle*, ed. Françoise Vallet and Michel Kazanski (Rouen: Association Française d'Archéologie Mérovingienne and Musée des Antiquités Nationales, 1993), 83–100, superseding Clark Hopkins, "The Siege of Dura," *Classical Journal* 42, no. 5 (1947): 251–59.
- 2 Only part of the countermines dug through the Romans' own anti-siege rampart was revealed directly. Fig. 18.1, top left, shows the 1930s railway embankments for the mining trucks used to remove excavated earth to dumps outside the city; one of these lay (and still lies) over the entrance area of the Roman tunnel, preventing its excavation. The extent of the Sasanian undermining was evident from the extent of the slumping of the city curtain and two walls of Tower 19. The Sasanian approach tunnel has never been located, but its line is fairly certain; a substantial mound of earth adjacent to pre-existing tomb entrances directly in front of the tower is almost certainly spoil from its excavation.
- 3 The key publications for the Tower 19 mines are Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, "The Persian Mines," *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 188–205; and Du Mesnil du Buisson, "Les ouvrages du siège à Doura-Europos," *Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 9th Series 1 (1944): 5–60.
- 4 The account offered here briefly summarises a detailed treatment to be published elsewhere: Simon T. James, "Stratagems, Combat and 'Chemical Warfare' in the Siege-mines of Dura-Europos," *American Journal of Archaeology* (forthcoming, 2011).
- 5 On Sasanian mass deportation of Roman city populations, and their "resettlement" in the Sasanian Empire, see Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 254–63.
- 6 The extensive excavations of the military base were never formally published, although many elements were described in the *Preliminary Reports*, e.g., the *praetorium* and a composite plan of the central area of the base in *Prelim. Rep. V*, 201–37, pl. III. On recent renewed work: Simon T. James, "New Light on the Roman Military Base at Dura-Europos: Interim Report on a Pilot Season of Fieldwork in 2005," in *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*, ed. Ariel S. Lewin and Pietrina Pellegrini, *British Archaeological Reports International Series*, 1717 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007), 29–47.
- 7 For an introduction to the Sasanian Empire, see Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*. For some recent scholarship on the Sasanians and their relations with Rome, see e.g., Dignas and Winter; Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, eds. *The Sasanian Era* (London: Tauris, 2008); and Matthew

p. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

- 8 Dura taken twice by the Sasanians: Frantz Grenet, "Les Sassanides à Doura-Europos (253 ap. J. C.): réexamen du matériel épigraphique iranien du site," in *Géographie Historique au Proche-Orient*, ed. Pierre-Louis Gatier, Bruno Helly, and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais (Paris: Éditions du Centre National Recherche Scientifique, 1988): 133–58; Simon T. James, "Dura-Europos and the Chronology of Syria in the 250s AD," *Chiron* 15 (1985): 111–24; and Simon T. James, *The Arms and Armour, and Other Military Equipment, The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 7* (London: British Museum, 2004), 22–24. Dura back in Roman hands in 254: *P. Dura* 32: C. Bradford Welles, Robert O. Fink and J. Frank Gilliam, eds., *The Parchments and Papyri. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report Volume 5, Part 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).
- 9 Mathilde Gelin and Pierre Leriche, pers. comm.; Mathilde Gelin, "Histoire et urbanisme d'une ville à travers son architecture de brique crue: l'Exemple de Doura-Europos" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris, 2000).
- 10 Work on the siege ramp is ongoing. Palmyrene Gate attack: Mathilde Gelin, Pierre Leriche, and Jeanine 'Abdul Massih, "La porte de Palmyre à Doura-Europos," in *Doura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 41–42, figs. 31–32.
- 11 A fact glossed over in Du Mesnil's consolidated account of the excavations: Du Mesnil du Buisson, "The Persian Mines"; see also Du Mesnil du Buisson, "Les ouvrages." For a detailed review, see: James, "Stratagems."
- 12 Unfortunately, documented associations between the artifacts recovered and objects now at Yale were lost at an early stage; however, the group can be substantially reconstructed, with certainty (e.g., the "Persian's" mail shirt and helmet) or high probability: James, *Arms and Armour*, 276.
- 13 Du Mesnil du Buisson, "The Persian Mines," 192–94.
- 14 James, *Arms and Armour*, nos. 449–51.
- 15 James, "New Light."
- 16 Two bodies, one still in armor, found in the barrack-housing of Block E8, were briefly recorded by Frank Brown in a field notebook (Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery).
- 17 For the weapons and armor from Dura, see James, *Arms and Armour*.
- 18 Du Mesnil du Buisson, "The Persian Mines," 198.
- 19 Du Mesnil du Buisson, "The Persian Mines," figs. 14–18; see James, "Stratagems" for detailed analysis.
- 20 For detailed analysis of the drawings and their relations, see James, "Stratagems." The drawings of the body-tangle published by Du Mesnil in *Prelim. Rep. VI* (fig. 18.8) are hard to interrelate, but close study in combination with other sources permits their correct spatial juxtaposition to be determined. They seem to represent three phases of excavation along the tunnel from west to east (here A, westernmost and uppermost, to C, deepest and furthest east), rather than horizontal layers (see schematic profile). They are superimposed top right to show the

overall conformation of the deposit. The lower row of drawings presents the three images in reverse order, approximating to the original sequence of deposition of the bodies. C, the deepest layer, is shown twice to help pick out the individuals identifiable in the drawing. Most skulls had either been burned, smashed or had rolled out of position; the individuals are discernable from articulated legs, pelvises and spines, sometimes only the latter, or in the case of bodies 18 and 19, just from the outlines of their armored shirts; the bodies had been entirely burned away in the conflagration which brought the roof down on the corpses.

- 21 Du Mesnil du Buisson, "Les ouvrages," 34, and n1.
- 22 To adapt modern British Army gallows-humor slang for close-protection bodyguards.
- 23 E.g., at Ambracia in 189 BCE: Livy 38.7; Polybius 21.28. Use of smoke generators in mine warfare was a technique listed as a stratagem in imperial-era Greco-Roman military treatises (e.g., Polyaeus, *Excerpts of the Stratagems of War*, 56.7).
- 24 H_2SO_4 .
- 25 On petrochemicals (*naphtha*) and sulphur used together as incendiary materials, see Josephus, *Jewish War*, 3.228 (thanks to Guy Stiebel for this reference). For an overview of the use of Near Eastern petrochemical materials for military incendiary purposes in Classical times, see Adrienne Mayor, *Greek Fire, Poison Arrows, and Scorpion Bombs: Biological and Chemical Warfare in the Ancient World* (London: Overlook Duckworth 2003), 228–35.
- 26 Poison-smoke generators of the type hypothesised here would be classified as chemical weapons under Article II of the modern international Chemical

Weapons Convention. For fuller discussion, see James, "Stratagems."

- 27 Daryaei, *Sasanian Persia*; Dignas and Winter. On Sasanian art, see Georgina Herrmann, *The Iranian Revival* (Oxford: Elsevier-Phaidon, 1977); and Janine Balty, *Hofkunst van de Sassaniden* (Brussels: Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis, 1993).
- 28 Leriche, "Techniques de guerre sassanides."
- 29 Fall of Hatra: Dignas and Winter, 209–11. Hatra had defied siege by Trajan and later by Septimius Severus, apparently twice: Cassius Dio 18.31, 76.10–12. The Hatrenes used powerful artillery and burning *naphtha* against Severus' troops: Mayor, 234.
- 30 Thomas S. Abler, *Hinterland Warriors and Military Dress: European Empires and Exotic Uniforms* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).
- 31 Flights and defections across the Partho-Sasanian border are recorded from the case of the "rogue" Roman general Q. Labienus onwards: Cassius Dio 48.24.
- 32 On mass deportations and "resettlement" in Sasanian territory and Roman-style art and architecture in the Sasanian Empire, see Dignas and Winter, 254–63.
- 33 Peter J. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: a New History* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2005).
- 34 James, *Arms and Armour*, no. 532.
- 35 Ibid., no. 379.
- 36 Roman mail shirts at Dura: Ibid., nos. 380–85.
- 37 Herrmann, 87–89.

- 38 For one of the earliest known examples see Mircea Rusu, "Das keltische Fürstengrab von Ciurmești in Rumänien," *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 50 (1969): 267–300.
- 39 Vladimir A. Goroncharovski, "Some Notes on Defensive Armament of the Bosphoran Cavalry," in *Arms and Armour as Indicators of Cultural Transfer: the Steppes and the Ancient World from Hellenistic Times to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Markus Mode and Jürgen Tubach (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006), 445–52.
- 40 Fig. 18.9 shows a reconstruction of the third-century Sasanian helmet from the Tower 19 countermine (right), compared with the fundamentally different design of contemporary Roman helmets (top left). However, the Sasanian example shows Roman influence, in its mail neck-defense, and upstanding frontal reinforcement. It also provides a clear prototype for the entirely new Roman helmet designs which appeared about fifty years after Dura fell (bottom left, based on an unprovenanced example); Simon T. James, "Evidence from Dura-Europos for the Origins of Late Roman Helmets," *Syria* 63 (1986): 107–34.
- 41 For development of Roman helmets in general, and third-century types in particular, see H. Russell Robinson, *The Armour of Imperial Rome* (London: Arms and Armour, 1975); Michael C. Bishop and J. C. N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006). For the evidence from Dura itself, see James, *Arms and Armour*, nos. 372–76.
- 42 Hans Klumbach, *Spatrömische Gardehelme* (Munich: Beck, 1973). More examples have been identified since this publication, e.g., Malcolm Lyne, "Late Roman Helmet Fragments from Richborough," *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 5 (1994): 97–105.

- 43 James, "Evidence from Dura-Europos."
- 44 For a reconstruction of the group of artifacts found in Tower 19 see James, *Arms and Armour*, table 3.
- 45 Plutarch, *Crassus*, 23–32.
- 46 E.g., *Clibanarii* accompanied Constantius II to Rome in 357: Ammianus 16.10.1–10.
- 47 The *ala Parthorum et Araborum* is attested at Mainz by the first-century tombstone of Maris, who is depicted shooting from horseback: Wolfgang Selzer, *Römische Steindenkmäler: Mainz in Römischer Zeit* (Mainz: Zabern, 1988), no. 91. A second horse-archer tombstone has also been found at Mainz, that of Flavius Proclus, born in Amman: Selzer, no. 90).
- 48 "Archaeological context" is often the most precious information of all, e.g., knowing the Persian helmet comes from a mine, which also contained coins proving it was deposited in the mid-250s CE. Illegal excavation—looting for the antiquities market which plagues the Middle East—destroys such vital information.
- 49 James, *Arms and Armour*, 14–16.
- 50 Minor examples: British soldiers serving in Afghanistan covet American ration-packs, while some sport beards like their Afghan National Army allies and mentees.
- 51 Polybius 18.28.
- 52 Peter Connolly, "Pilum, Gladius and Pugio in the Late Republic," *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 8 (1997): 41–57; Fernando Quesada Sanz, "Gladius Hispaniensis: an Archaeological View from Iberia," *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 8 (1997): 251–70; and Bishop and Coulston, 54–56.

- 53 This is the quality modern British soldiers call "allyness," the acme of which comprises weapons and equipment agreed to be "nails" (presumably from "hard as nails").
- 54 Charles R. Whittaker, *The Frontiers of The Roman Empire. a Social and Archaeological Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).
- 55 Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*.

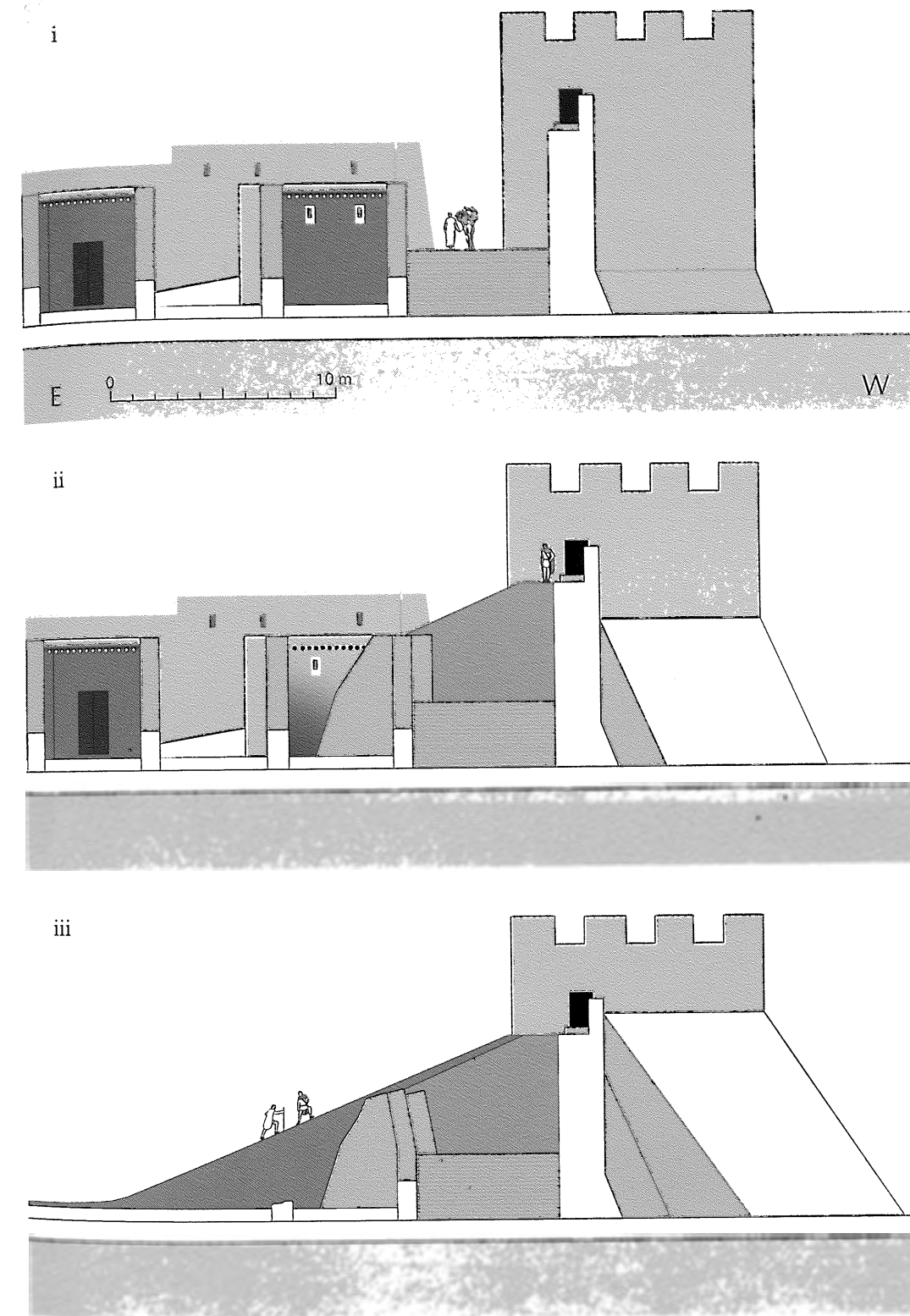


Figure 18.10: The sequence of events in the mine, as newly reconstructed. Horizontal dimensions are accurate, but vertical ones approximate, as precise data were not recorded at the time.

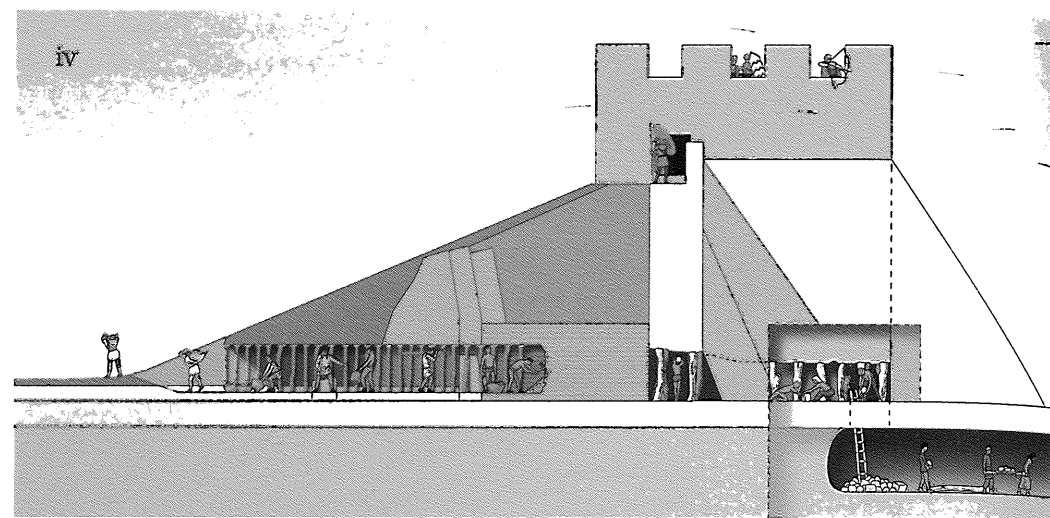
i. The defenses at Tower 19 before the siege, with adjacent buildings and deep rubbish/road-surface accumulation in Wall Street

ii. The initial rampart, with Wall Street filled in and revetted by the curtain wall and glacis, and reinforced house walls.

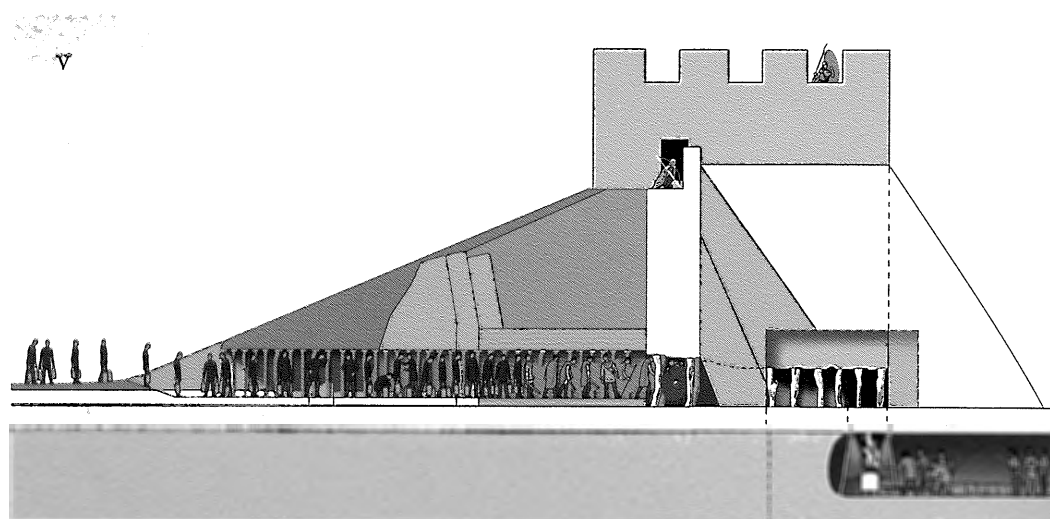
iii Final, extended anti-siege rampart, with projecting house walls demolished.

Figure 18.11:

iv. Sasanian approach mine and undermining of Tower 19 are completed, and the Sasanian sappers are now tunnelling along the curtain wall toward the viewer; the Romans are digging a countermine to intercept this.



v. The Romans break through and pour into the attackers' tunnel. The forewarned Sasanians feed naphtha and sulphur onto their smoke-generator (brazier and bellows), rapidly engulfing the Romans in dense, lethal fumes.



vi. Most of the Romans were overcome before they could escape. As the smoke clears, the Sasanians enter the tunnel and pile the Roman casualties into a wall protecting them from Roman countermeasures (left) while they assemble incendiary materials and inflammables (right) to destroy the countermine.

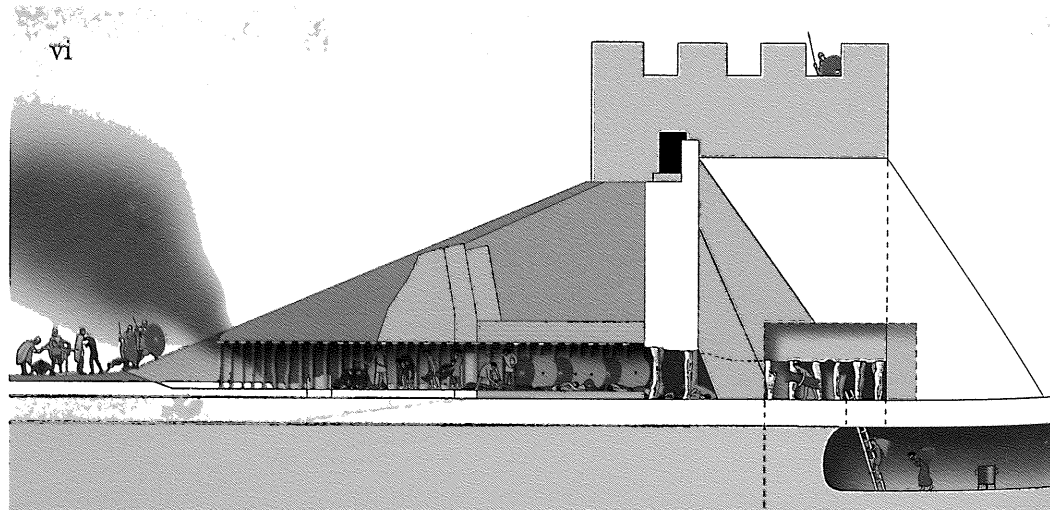
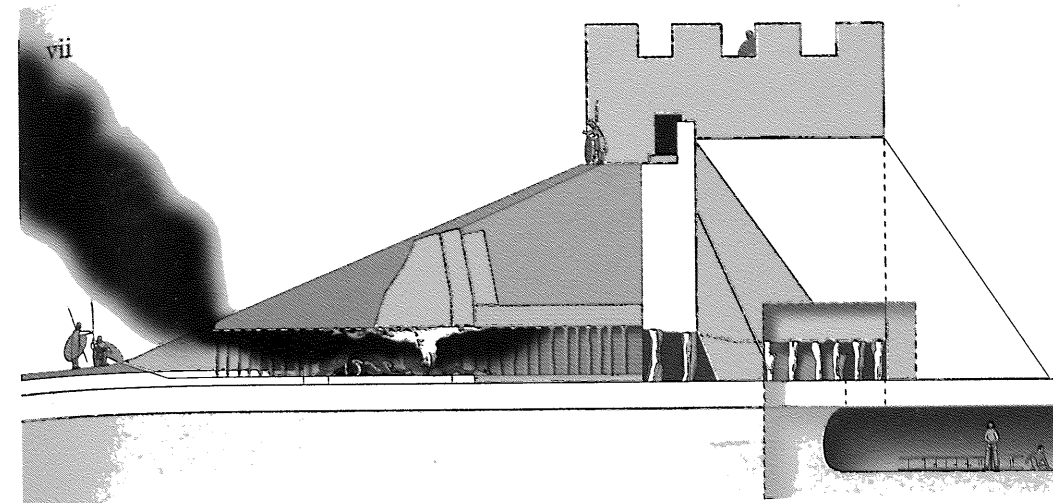
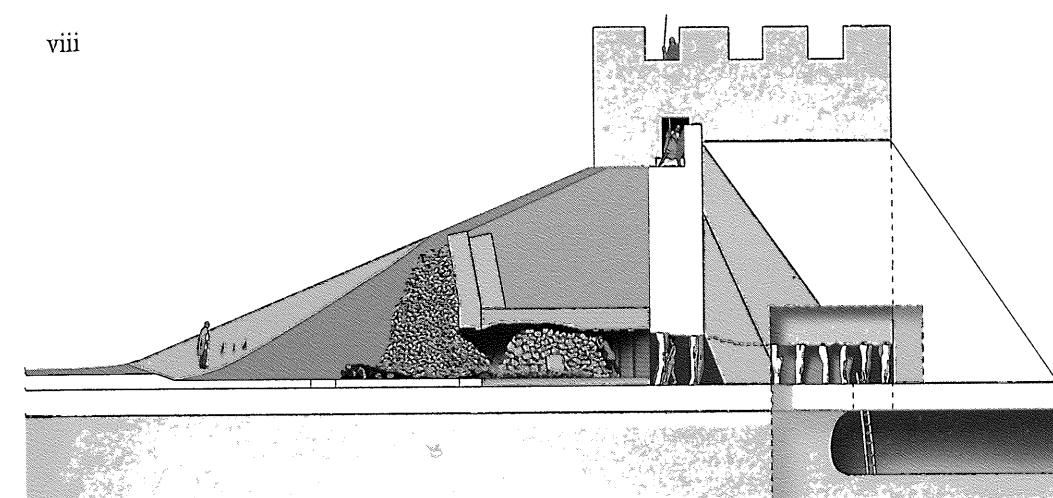


Figure 18.12:

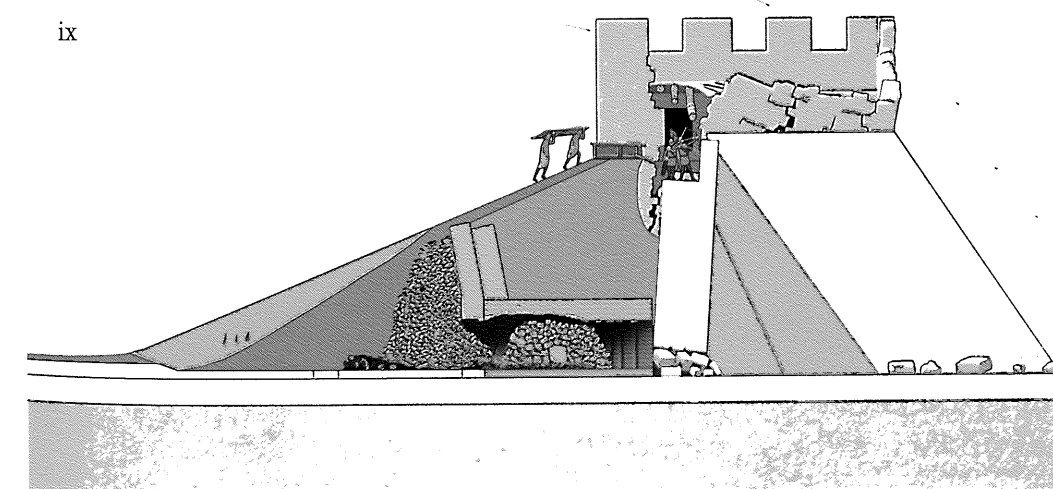
vii. The Sasanian who set the fire succumbs to the ensuing inferno himself.



viii. The western half of the countermine entirely collapses. The Sasanians resume undermining the curtain, using the still-intact portion of the Roman mine as a convenient stone-dump.



ix. The Sasanians complete and fire their sap, but the enshrouding rampart successfully prevents tower and wall from toppling as intended. No practicable breach results, and the Romans are able to reoccupy their ramparts.



LUCINDA DIRVEN

STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS: THE RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR OF PALMYRENES AND OTHER FOREIGNERS IN DURA-EUROPOS

Introduction

In the middle of the third century, shortly before the Sasanians succeeded in conquering Dura-Europos, a great variety of deities were worshipped in this small city overlooking the Euphrates. Excavators have found fifteen sanctuaries so far, and it is plausible that the remains of more religious buildings still are hidden below the desert sand.¹ Best known are the Synagogue and the small House Church that were discovered just inside the city wall. In addition to the monotheistic faiths associated with these buildings, cults honouring a whole range of deities of varying origins were established in the city. Historians of religion can discern gods of Greek, Babylonian, Aramaic, Phoenician, Arab, Iranian, and Roman origin. This religious variety mirrors the social diversity in the city, that in turn results from Dura-Europos' political history and geographical location.² After all, gods do not simply fall from heaven; they arrive together with their worshippers. The majority of the population of Dura-Europos was made up of descendants of the Greek (Macedonian) settlers; but the town also was inhabited by a mix of Syrians (especially people from the Middle Euphrates region and Palmyra), Mesopotamians, and Steppe pastoralists, as well as Roman provincial soldiers who originated from Syria and beyond.³

Dura-Europos was a small city, and the sanctuaries that have been excavated so far are located quite close to one another. Due to this proximity, the question arises as to whether, and if so in what way, cults of different origin influenced each other: did foreign deities retain their original character, or did they change because they were assimilated to the gods worshipped in the immigrants' new surroundings? Information about the religious life in Dura-Europos consists almost entirely of material remains, such as temples, paintings, reliefs, graffiti, and inscriptions. No theological treatises or liturgical texts have come down to us. Since it is impossible to decipher a deity's character from his or her name and outward appearance, the quest for the process of religious interaction is bound to start with a study of the religious behavior of the worshippers. The present article deals with the religion of three groups of people, originating from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra, respectively (see plan, p. 15). Palmyra (or Tadmor) is located in the Syrian Desert about 220

kilometers west of Dura-Europos. During the first three centuries of the Common Era, the oasis flourished thanks to its role in international caravan trade.⁴ The village of Anath is situated on the left bank of the Euphrates about 120 kilometers south of Dura-Europos; and Hatra is situated in the steppe of the eastern Jazirah, in North Mesopotamia, about 80 kilometers southwest of present-day Mosul. Like Palmyra, this desert city flourished in the first centuries of the Common Era. My study focuses on migrants from these three cities because of the rich sources that are available for the study of these groups: architectural remains, sculptures in the round and reliefs, paintings, inscriptions and graffiti, and papyri.

Anthropologists know from studies into modern diaspora communities that the religious behavior of migrant groups depends on many factors. First, one has to take into account the religious situation in the group's place of origin. This, in turn, varies according to the social, economic, and intellectual background of the people. Second, the social and economic position of the immigrants in their new environment is important. Their religious behavior may be influenced by the duration and purpose of their stay; their social position, number, age and profession; the remoteness of their native country; the degree of contact they maintain with their place of origin; and so forth. Last but not least, the behavior of these groups may be said to depend on the religious situation they encounter in their new place of residence. It follows from this research that extensive information on social factors is needed in order to study and explain the process of religious interaction.

Studying the process of religious interaction is a complex matter then, even with relation to modern groups; this holds true even more for communities during antiquity. This is largely due to the deficiencies of the sources at our disposal. Even in Dura-Europos, where the material is relatively abundant, there is a lack of information on most of the social factors that are crucial in explaining the religious behavior of migrant groups. With many strangers, modern historians do not even know exactly from where they came, let alone what the religious situation was at their place of origin. It consequently is impossible to establish whether anything changed in their new environment.

This even holds true for the two most famous religious groups in Dura-Europos: the Jews and the Christians. The Pahlavi dipinti in the paintings from the Synagogue probably were fashioned by visitors from Mesopotamia, which suggests that the Jewish community had strong links with Babylonia.⁵ It unfortunately is impossible to say whether this also was where the roots of this thriving community lay, so art historians cannot tell whether the stunning illustrations to the Jewish scriptures were inspired by synagogues in Mesopotamia or resulted from local influences. Personal names suggest that at least some of the Christians in Dura-Europos were Roman soldiers. Since the army was made of men of various origins—locals, people from the west of Syria, and, perhaps, some even from northern Europe—it is impossible to say to what kind of Christianity they adhered;⁶ consequently, the reading of the biblical scenes that decorate their baptism is bound to remain hypothetical.

Identifying foreign groups on the basis of archaeological material—especially inscriptions—is equally problematic. People plausibly can be identified as foreigners on the basis of the use of foreign script or language, characteristic personal names, or deities typical of a certain city or region,⁷ but people who assimilate to their new environment disappear from our sight. Once this assimilation is complete, and their origin is no longer of any importance to them, they stop being foreigners. As a consequence, they are no longer of interest to the present research. It is important to realize, however, that strangers who retain markers of their

foreignness dominate the picture, whereas they may not be representative necessarily of all the people of a particular origin.

Of great importance to the study of religious interaction, but exceedingly difficult to read, are instances in which elements of various origin intermingle. It frequently is impossible to tell on the basis of epigraphic evidence alone whether we are dealing with foreigners who have assimilated themselves to their new environment or with locals who have adopted foreign elements. A good example of an inscription that is open to several interpretations is located on a small limestone altar, dated to the third century CE (pl. 38), found in the building known as the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, situated in the northeast corner of the city.⁸ The altar is dedicated to the Palmyrene god Iarhibol; but the inscription is in Greek rather than Palmyrene, and the tribune who dedicated it bears a Latin name not a Palmyrene one. Since Iarhibol, who was popular among Palmyrene auxiliaries serving in the Roman army, is a typical Palmyrene god, it is likely that this was the background of the present dedicant as well.⁹ It would, however, be equally plausible to suppose that the tribune was a foreigner, who adopted the cult because he was in command of a Palmyrene unit.

People from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra stand out in Dura-Europos because they can be identified comparatively easily. First, they often identify themselves in inscriptions as originating from one of these places. In addition, people from Palmyra and Hatra frequently use their own script. Finally, typical local deities and personal names help us to establish their origin. Neither of these features suffices in itself, but in combination they provide a fairly good indication as to someone's origin. Last but not least, the religious situation in Palmyra, Anath and Hatra is relatively well known. This enables us to compare the religion of the people in Dura-Europos with the religion in their city of origin.

Of the three groups, people from Palmyra by far are the most significant. The material pertaining to the Palmyrenes vastly outnumbers that relating to the other two places and provides an excellent opportunity for a study of religion along social lines.¹⁰ The history of the Palmyrene community in Dura-Europos covers almost three centuries, from 33 BCE to the fall of the city in 256 CE. Palmyrene migrants can be divided in two distinct groups: soldiers who served in the Roman army and merchants. By comparing these two groups, modern scholars of Dura-Europos can establish whether or not this difference in social position influenced their religious preferences. Last but not least, information on Palmyrene merchants and soldiers who lived in the Parthian east as well as those in the Roman west is relatively abundant.¹¹ This enables the historian to establish whether their behavior in Dura-Europos was influenced by their new environment.

In the following, I start with a short sketch of the social and economic history of the inhabitants of Dura-Europos who originated from Palmyra, Hatra, and Anath. I subsequently shall discuss their religious behavior on the basis of archaeological remains found in Dura-Europos.

The Social and Economic History of the Inhabitants from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra

Information on the social and economic position of the three foreign groups residing in Dura-Europos is scarce and seldom explicit. For the Parthian period, historians have to rely on a limited number of archaeological remains such as temples, inscriptions, and figural representations. The dated inscriptions inform us about the history of these communities, whereas the location of the buildings reflects the social and

economic position of their clientele. The construction history of these sanctuaries mirrors the economic development and growth over time of the migrant community in question. Finds from the Roman period are more abundant but are confined to the Palmyrene community. In addition to the archaeological remains, military parchments and papyri provide information on Palmyrene soldiers serving in the Roman army. There can be no doubt that many foreigners lived in Roman Dura-Europos, but it is frequently impossible to tell where they were coming from.

The presence of Palmyrenes in Dura-Europos is first recorded in 33 BCE, when two Palmyrenes jointly founded a temple on the plateau outside the city walls. Shortly before the middle of the first century CE, Palmyrene inhabitants are attested within the city proper. In all likelihood they participated in the cult of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin, whose temple against the city walls was founded in about 20 to 30 CE. Close by, the excavators found an *andron* (assembly room) dedicated to the worship of the god Aphlad, who was from the village of Anath. Like the god, most of Aphlad's worshippers originated from this village on the Euphrates south of Dura-Europos. It is possible that Palmyrenes joined this group.¹² Around the same time, Palmyrenes established a religious meeting place in Block H1, on the spot where the structure known as the Temple of the Gadde was built around the middle of the second century CE. An inhabitant from Hatra erected a dedication to the Hatrene god Shamash in the Temple of Atargatis.¹³ The text is undated but probably was erected during the first century CE. In addition to this inscription, three graffiti in the Hatrene script were found scattered in various locations at Dura-Europos. The evidence at our disposal suggests that the temples in the necropolis and Block H1 were used exclusively by Palmyrenes, whereas the sanctuaries of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin and Aphlad were probably used by a mixed clientele of strangers and local inhabitants. People from Hatra apparently lodged in a local sanctuary.

The exclusive Palmyrene character of the temples in the necropolis and Block H1 is apparent from the inscriptions that are predominantly Palmyrene. Most inscriptions from Dura-Europos are in Greek; furthermore, the inscriptions from these temples mention typical Palmyrene deities, as well as personal names that are common in Palmyra but rare, if they occur at all, in other Durene inscriptions. It may be inferred from the dimensions of these sanctuaries, and their limited growth over the years, that the Palmyrene community was fairly small in the Parthian period. In contrast to most Durene temples, these sanctuaries have only one assembly room. Inscriptions from Dura-Europos, Palmyra and elsewhere, show that these assembly rooms were used for ritual dining by social groups that were organized on a familial, religious, or ethnic basis; hence, the number of assembly rooms reflects the social and perhaps religious diversity among the visitors of a particular temple. Palmyrene temples have only one such room



Figure 12.1: Relief of the god Aphlad of the village of Anath on the Euphrates, Dura-Europos, ca. mid-first century CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

and this suggests they were frequented by a homogenous group of worshippers.

It is not obligatory that a religious association was comprised of people from the same family or the same locality, and there may have been exceptions to this rule. The religious association that used the assembly room that is called the temple of Aphlad, is a case in point. The dedicatory inscription of this room mentions the names of eleven people that belonged to the religious association of the god Aphlad from the village of Anath.¹⁴ Several of the names in this list are also attested in inscriptions from Palmyra; hence, it is possible that people from Palmyra joined the people from Anath who introduced their god in Dura-Europos.¹⁵ Be that as it may, it follows from the outfit of the priest on the relief that was found in this room that the servants of the god did come from Anath (fig. 12.1). The priest wears the conical headdress typical of priests from the Middle Euphrates region, whereas Palmyrene priests are invariably depicted wearing a modius. The two Palmyrene reliefs that were found in the Temple of the Gadde in Dura-Europos show that Palmyrenes adhered to their priestly modius outside Palmyra (fig. 12.2, pl. 1).

The so-called temple of Zeus Kyrios may have had a mixed Palmyrene and Durene clientele.¹⁶ The small relief dedicated to the god Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin was found in situ encased in the back wall of a small open-air sanctuary. The relief bears the only bilingual inscription in Palmyrene and Greek from Parthian Dura-Europos and is dated to 31 CE (pl. 42).¹⁷ Both the inscription and the iconography of the god are strongly influenced by Palmyra, but at the same time the relief and inscription display local Durene elements. This may reflect the mixed origin of the people who visited this shrine. In Dura-Europos, Palmyrene inscriptions are normally associated with people from Palmyra. In Palmyra, however, bilingual religious texts are very rare. Palmyrene is dominant in religious texts from the oasis.¹⁸ This suggests that the dedicatory inscription of the Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin relief was adapted to the situation in Dura-Europos, where Greek was the main language.

The god Baalshamin is not native to the Euphrates region but arrived in Dura-Europos from the west of Syria, in all likelihood via Palmyra.¹⁹ The iconography of the god on the relief is not typical of deities from the Euphrates region and tallies with the iconography of Baalshamin in Palmyra, which in turn derives from the west.²⁰ The bearded god is shown enthroned on the right-hand side of the relief. The "Lord of the Heaven" is dressed in a mantle and a long-sleeved tunic—an outfit that mirrors the Phoenician origin of this storm god. He holds a scepter in his left hand and a bouquet of grain and various sorts of fruit in his right. On the left-hand side of the relief stands Seleukos, the dedicant of the relief. He holds a ram—his offering



Figure 12.2: Palmyrene relief representing Hairan offering to Gad Tadmor, Temple of the Gadde, naos, 159 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5313

to the deity in his arms. Like the god, Seleukos is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic and a mantle. He is bare-headed and is represented wearing shoes, which implies that he is not a priest. The style of the relief suggests a Palmyrene sculptor or someone strongly influenced by a Palmyrene workshop made the relief. The stone is different from the material that is normally used in Palmyra and Dura-Europos; it was perhaps imported from the area of Anath.

Someone originating from Hatra erected a dedication to the Hatrene god Shamash-Helios in the so-called temple of Atargatis, an otherwise local Durene temple. In addition to this inscription, only three Hatreaan graffiti were found in Dura-Europos.²¹ This possibly means that the group of Hatrenes in Dura-Europos was small, which in turn explains why someone from Hatra chose to worship his ancestral god in a sanctuary that was predominantly used by local people. In this temple, the goddess Atargatis was worshipped together with a number of other deities. One of the reliefs found in this temple tallies with Lucian's description of the cult statues in the main sanctuary of the goddess in Hierapolis in northern Syria. It represents the enthroned goddess and her consort Hadad, with the sacred standard erect between them (pl. 43).²² Hierapolitan deities were also popular in Hatra, and this perhaps explains the dedicant's choice of this temple.²³ It is significant that this stranger from Hatra decided for a bilingual inscription that combines a Hatraean and Greek text.²⁴ In Hatra itself, none of the five hundred or so inscriptions found thus far is bilingual; hence, the choice for a Hatreaan-Greek text was probably due to the presence of local people, who were in the majority in this temple.

Although none of the inscriptions mentions the profession of people from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra, it is likely that many of them were involved in mercantile activities during the Parthian period.²⁵ The appearance of these strangers around the beginning of the Common Era coincides with a boom in the local economy manifested by the arrival of new inhabitants and a surge of building activity. During the first two centuries of the Common Era, Dura-Europos functioned as the political, administrative, and economic center of a large agricultural and cattle-breeding area on the Middle Euphrates, which extended from the mouth of the Chabur in the north to Anath or Hit in the south.²⁶ The assumption that the three groups were involved in trade is substantiated by the location of their sanctuaries. The oldest Palmyrene temple was founded outside the city walls. It probably was intended as a resting place for animals and their attendants. The location of the two Palmyrene sanctuaries within the city confirms the hypothesis that Palmyrenes had their business here. The Palmyrene temple in Block H1 is located in the proximity of the bazaar. When founded in 28 CE, the temple of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin was located in a vacant area. This suggests that the adherents of this god were outsiders who had arrived recently in the town. The same holds true for the sanctuary of another group of newcomers, the people from Anath; Anath was an agricultural center, and it is plausible that people from this village came to Dura-Europos to trade their products.

The history and growth of the Palmyrene community in Dura-Europos accords well with what is known of the development of the Palmyrene caravan trade and the ensuing flourishing of Palmyra.²⁷ The foundation of a temple in 33 BCE substantiates the assumption that Palmyra already had at this time commercial relationships with the east. Around the middle of the second century, the Palmyrene temple in Block H1 was rebuilt and enlarged substantially. This coincides with the zenith of Palmyra's caravan trade. It is unlikely that Dura-Europos was located on the route of the Palmyrene caravans to the east; the caravan trade made extensive use of the Euphrates River. On their way back from southern Mesopotamia, the merchants disem-

barked at Hit, about 300 kilometers south of Dura-Europos, and from there followed their way back home to Palmyra through the desert.²⁸ In all probability, therefore, the Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos were involved in local trade with people from the city and from its agricultural hinterland, such as Anath.

People from Hatra and Anath are unattested in Dura-Europos after 165 CE, during the period in which the Romans ruled the city. The number of Palmyrenes increased dramatically during the last one hundred years of the city's existence. Little is known about the first forty years of Roman occupation. The number of Roman soldiers stationed at Dura-Europos appears to have been small, and life in the city by and large remained the same as in the preceding period. During the second half of the second century, a contingent of Palmyrene archers was stationed at Dura-Europos. Although they belonged to the Roman garrison, they probably were an unofficial unit of the Roman army.²⁹ After 208 CE, large numbers of soldiers were stationed at Dura-Europos. One of the regiments at this time was the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*. As is clear from its name, this cohort mainly consisted of Palmyrenes, who were famous for their equestrian skills and their expertise with bow and quiver.³⁰

The growth of the Palmyrene community during the Roman period is apparent from the rebuilding and enlargement of existing temples and the foundation of new sanctuaries. In 173 CE, the Palmyrene temple in the necropolis doubled in size, and in the same year an assembly room on Main Street was rebuilt in order to accommodate larger groups.³¹ During the same period, a southern complex was added to the Temple of the Gadde in Block H1, doubling the building in size. In 194 CE, a Palmyrene adorned with paintings the *iwan* (dining room) of his house in Block M7.³² Palmyrenes are first attested in the so-called Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, in the northwest corner of the city, during the Roman period. Durene inhabitants, who had themselves represented in paintings that were found in great quantity in the naos of this temple, had founded the sanctuary around the beginning of the Common Era. When the northern part of the city was converted into a military camp, Palmyrene soldiers joined the civic population that used the temple.³³ Part of another temple in the north part of the town, the so-called temple of Artemis-Azzanathkona, was converted into a military clerical office in which Palmyrene soldiers figured prominently. In 167/168 CE, Palmyrene archers founded a Mithraeum in this part of town.

The growth of the Palmyrene community clearly was connected with the large numbers of Palmyrenes serving in the Roman army. Several finds suggest that not all Palmyrenes who resided in Dura-Europos at this time were soldiers. The extension of the Palmyrene temple in the necropolis as well as of the Temple of the Gadde suggests that soldiers joined the pre-existing Palmyrene community. It is unlikely that the Palmyrene who had his dining room adorned with paintings in 194 CE was a soldier. The location of this house in the domestic area of the town, as well as the civilian character of the paintings, suggest he was a city-dweller.

Migrant Religion in the Parthian Period

Now that we have discussed the social and economic position of the people from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra, we turn to their religious behavior in their new environment. Since by far the majority of the material pertains to Palmyrenes, their religion will figure prominently in this account. The discussion of the religion

of Palmyrene merchants roughly covers the period from around the beginning of the Common Era until 165 CE, when the city fell into Roman hands. Their religious preferences will be discussed by means of two temples: the temple in the necropolis and the temple in Block H1, in which two reliefs that represent Gadde were recovered.

According to the Palmyrene inscription that commemorates its foundation in 33 BCE, two individuals who identify themselves as members of two different Palmyrene tribes dedicated the temple in the necropolis to the gods Bel and Iarhibol. A second inscription from the temple is in Greek and is dedicated to the god Bel. The third inscription is very long and commemorates the dedication of a second naos apparently by a descendant of one of the original founders of the sanctuary nearly two centuries earlier.³⁴ The material admittedly is scarce; however, when compared to the religious situation in Palmyra and the material that testifies to other Palmyrene expatriates, it turns out to be a rich source of information.

The dedicatory inscription of 33 BCE is one of the oldest Palmyrene inscriptions yet discovered. It reads:

...in the month Sivan of the year 279 [June 33 BCE], Zabdibol. The son of Baýasa, of the Bene Gaddibol and Maliku, the son of Ramu of the Bene Komare made the shrine for Bel and Iarhibol.³⁵

Compared to inscriptions from Palmyra, the text is unique in two respects:³⁶ First, it is the only extant inscription that mentions Bel and Iarhibol together. Second, it is the only inscription in which two members of different tribes jointly dedicate a temple. In Palmyra, religious dedications invariably are made by members of the same tribe. It is even possible to go one step further: in Palmyra a number of temples were built and attended by members of one particular tribe. One of the dedicants of the Durene inscriptions identifies himself as a member of the Komare tribe. This tribe administered a sanctuary dedicated to the gods Aglibol and Malakbel in Palmyra. Outside Palmyra, however, this individual did not dedicate a temple to his ancestral deities but opted instead for Bel and Iarhibol. This is best explained by his dedication of the temple in Dura-Europos with a member of another Palmyrene clan. This must have led them to look beyond their ancestral religion and search for religious common ground; hence, this inscription suggests that the gods Bel and Iarhibol were venerated by the entire Palmyrene community.

Information on Palmyrene religion before the Common Era is very limited but confirms this hypothesis.³⁷ Most of the material was found underneath the present temple of Bel in Palmyra, which was dedicated to Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol in 32 CE.³⁸ It follows from the older material that before the present structure was built, a congregation of Palmyrene clans used the place for the worship of their family gods, headed by the god Bel. So Bel was the supreme god of this temple but by no means the only god worshipped here. This explains why Palmyrene inscriptions refer to the place as the "house of their gods."³⁹ Later inscriptions show that the cult of particular deities was confined to certain families, and it seems reasonable to suppose the same holds true for the early period.

One of the gods associated with Bel in his sanctuary was Iarhibol. Inscriptions suggest this god was connected closely with Bel and his priests. In all likelihood, Iarhibol's eminent position results from his function as the protective deity of the Efca, the spring and source of life for Palmyra.⁴⁰ As a deity of the spring, the

entire Palmyrene community worshipped Iarhibol. The administration of his temple likely was unconfined to one particular tribe. So both Bel and Iarhibol were the tutelary deities of two important sanctuaries at Palmyra. Their cult transcended the social divisions of the oasis and touched upon the community as a whole. The religious organization in Palmyra therefore explains the choice of the two Palmyrenes in Dura-Europos. They preferred Bel and Iarhibol to their family gods, because their sanctuary was unrestricted to one particular tribe or group: it was open to all Palmyrenes who happened to visit Dura-Europos.

The best explanation for such communal undertakings is the Palmyrenes' position as merchants: Inscriptions from Palmyra show that the caravan trade cut across the genealogical boundaries in the city and was a major incentive for the political unification of the clans. Merchants maintain close contacts with their city of origin; hence, it is to be expected that their religious preferences will follow the religious developments in their hometown. The other inscriptions from the temple in the necropolis do indeed show this to be the case. In these texts from a later date, Bel is mentioned alone or with Iarhibol and Aglibol. This mirrors the religious development in Palmyra.

In 32 CE, the main temple in Palmyra was re-dedicated to Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol. In this constellation, known as the Triad of Bel, Bel is the main deity with Iarhibol and Aglibol as his attendants or acolytes. On representations, Bel is depicted in the center, flanked by Iarhibol in the most prominent position on his right and Aglibol on his left. As the sun and the moon, they symbolize Bel's cosmic supremacy. That Aglibol is yet unmentioned in the inscription from Dura-Europos dating from 33 BCE, suggests the triad did not exist at this time and that the constellation was formed when the new temple of Bel was built. This innovation testifies to religious centralization in Palmyra. The new temple of Bel centred on the cult of the communal deities Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol, whereas tribal deities were now excluded from the city temple and confined to their own sanctuaries in the city. The organization of the temple in the necropolis of Dura-Europos followed this development, for Bel became its only beneficiary in the Common Era.

The city gods of Palmyra were popular particularly among Palmyrene merchants abroad. The triad of Bel was well-liked in remote places, such as Rome and the island of Cos.⁴¹ The religious behavior of Palmyrene merchants in Dura-Europos therefore tallies with their preferences elsewhere. It is exactly the kind of behavior one would expect among small groups of merchants who live in close contact with their city of origin. Parallels are to be found among Assyrian traders travelling between their homeland and their trading colony in Karum Kanish during the second millennium BCE and among the merchants from Tyre in Carthage during the sixth century BCE.⁴²

Opting for a communal religious identity does not exclude the possibility that homage was likewise paid to the gods of the new environment. The two can exist side by side, as is shown by two reliefs found in another Palmyrene temple, the Temple of the Gadde. This temple takes its name from the two reliefs representing the Gad of Dura and the Gad of Tadmor that were placed originally in the naos or cult niche of this temple.⁴³ Gad is the Aramaic name for a protective deity (Greek Tyche or Roman Fortuna).⁴⁴ It follows from the Palmyrene stone and typical Palmyrene style that both were fabricated in Palmyra. According to the Aramaic inscription on the plinth, the same individual dedicated both reliefs in 159 CE.

The first relief depicts the dedicant, Hairan the son of Maliku the son of Nasor, offering incense before the Gad of Palmyra, the tutelary deity of the oasis (fig. 12.2). The dedicant wears a *modius* headdress surrounded by a wreath that is typical of Palmyrene priests.⁴⁵ Inscriptional evidence from Palmyra suggests that

the Gad of Tadmor was actually the goddess Astarte, who functioned as Bel's companion in the temple of Bel, the city temple of Palmyra.⁴⁶ It is obvious, therefore, that this relief has a municipal significance.

The same holds true for its counterpart on which the same dedicant is represented sacrificing before the Gad of Dura (pl. 1). The deity in this case is not a Palmyrene god but rather the Greek god Zeus, who is shown enthroned between two eagles. Zeus was the principal god of Dura-Europos and was worshipped here as Zeus Megistos, the greatest Zeus.⁴⁷ The figure standing to his left may be identified as Seleucos Nicator, the founder of the Seleucid dynasty and, allegedly, Dura-Europos. This act clearly testifies to Palmyrene immigrants' respect for the major cult in their new residence. A significant piece of information is that the dedicant wears the headdress typical of Palmyrene priests. It is clear, therefore, that he honored the main cult in his new residence, but as Palmyrene. Simultaneously, he remained loyal to the city goddess of Palmyra; hence, the Palmyrenes in Dura-Europos committed themselves to the religion of their new surroundings while preserving their indigenous religious identity.

From a cultural point of view, Palmyrenes turn out to be surprisingly chauvinistic. The two reliefs that represent the Gadde (fig. 12.2, pl. 1) and the relief of Nemesis (pl. 4) show that it was common for Palmyrenes to import votive reliefs from their native city. This may be due to the quality of Palmyrene sculpture, which far surpasses sculpture from local Durene workshops.⁴⁸ The available evidence suggests that during the first century CE, several Durene workshops worked in the Palmyrene tradition. The reliefs representing Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin (pl. 42), Tyche with doves (pl. 44), and the god Aphlad (fig. 12.1), represent this local style under Palmyrene influence. In the later period, however, local sculptures invariably were made in a crude style influenced little by Palmyra. The reliefs of Atargatis and Hadad (pl. 43), Arsu riding a camel (pl. 46), the three Herakles sculptures (pls. 47, 48, 68), and the giant male head of a former cult statue (pl. 41), all display this crude local style.

In contrast to the sculpture that was influenced by Palmyra, the religious architecture of Palmyrene sanctuaries in Dura-Europos by and large accords with the temples of other religious groups in Dura-Europos and differs from the monumental Greco-Roman architecture of the most important temples in Palmyra. This is not due necessarily to Durene influences. It is possible that in addition to the monumental Romanized temples, Palmyra once possessed small sanctuaries similar to the Durene temples. The simple sanctuaries found in the Palmyrène (Palmyra's hinterland) suggest there was more to Palmyrene architecture than has come down to us.

Like the Palmyrenes, immigrants from Anath remained faithful to their own religious traditions and paid respect to their new environment. In addition to the dedication of the *andron* to the god Aphlad, the cult relief of the religious association was found in this room. It depicts a god clad in Hellenistic cuirass standing on two griffins (fig. 12.1). The dedicatory inscription on the relief refers to the image as the ἀφείδρυσς of Aphlad (the god of the village of Anath).⁴⁹ The latter specification characterizes Aphlad as the tutelary deity of this village. Louis Robert points out that the word ἀφείδρυσς implies that they copied the original cult image of their god in the relief.⁵⁰ The dedicatory inscription of the *andron*, dated to 54 CE, mentions eleven individuals belonging to six different families.⁵¹ The social and religious identity of this group hence was based on their common origin rather than family ties. It is clear that their religious differentiation by no means undermined their loyalty to the political authorities of their new residence; on the contrary, the *andron* was dedicated to the well-being of the *strategos* of Dura-Europos. Religious differentiation apparently

caused no problems as long as one paid homage to the local authorities.

The dedicant from Hatra, too, remains faithful to the god of his city. Throughout the first three centuries of the Common Era, Hatra was sacred to the god Shamash (the sun god).⁵² In addition to the sun god, several other deities were worshipped in Hatra, but again, it is the god of the city that is chosen as the divine recipient abroad.

The Religion of Palmyrene Soldiers

Palmyrene soldiers were stationed not only in Dura-Europos but also all over the Roman Empire: in Africa, Asia Minor, Rome, and Britain. The religious preferences of Palmyrene soldiers stationed in Dura-Europos by and large correspond to their behavior elsewhere.⁵³ Compared to other military camps, the situation in Dura-Europos was slightly more complex. This is partly due to Dura-Europos yielding the greatest number of military records found to date. It also results from the long history of Palmyrenes in the city and the interaction between the long established mercantile community and the new military. Evidence from the Temple of the Gadde and the temple in the necropolis suggests that Palmyrene soldiers joined the existing Palmyrene groups; unfortunately, it sometimes is impossible to distinguish the two. As elsewhere, the Palmyrene soldiers adopted facets of the religion of the army and simultaneously held on to their individual religious preferences and indigenous traditions. Material from Dura-Europos amply illustrates that these two aspects of religious practice coexisted peacefully.

The *Feriale Duranum* (the religious calendar of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*) provides one of the best examples of the adoption of official religious practices by a foreign regiment. This document, which dates from the reign of Severus Alexander around 223/227 CE, allows us to reconstruct the soldiers' entire religious year.⁵⁴ Although it is a festival calendar of a foreign unit, the *Feriale* mentions no gods from the locality of Dura-Europos or Palmyra; it lists only army festivals, Roman gods of public festivals, the cults of the reigning emperor (*divi*), and imperial women. These religious observances are mostly the same as those in Rome itself. Most scholars consequently assume that copies identical to the *Feriale* from Dura-Europos were used all over the Roman Empire. As such, this calendar contributed to the Romanization and unification of the army.

In addition to participating in the official religion of the Roman army, Palmyrene soldiers worshipped gods who were never adopted officially by Rome but enjoyed great popularity among soldiers. The cult of Mithras is proverbial here. In 168/169 CE, Palmyrene archers founded a Mithraeum in the northern part of the city.⁵⁵ They probably first encountered the cult when they were stationed elsewhere on the Roman frontier, probably in Dacia or Moesia. At the beginning of the third century CE, the Palmyrene archers were joined by members of other Roman troops. The cult clearly had a supraethnic, panimperial basis. In Dura-Europos, as elsewhere in the Roman Empire, the devotees of Mithras were a brotherhood of men who mainly shared the same profession.

Both the ground plan of the shrine and the iconography of the two cult reliefs resemble monuments of the cult attested elsewhere in the Roman Empire. At the back wall of the sanctuary, two stelae representing Mithras killing the bull were found inserted. The small relief bears a Palmyrene dedicatory inscription dated

to 168/169 CE. Only two years later, a certain Zenobios, commander of the Palmyrene archers, dedicated a second tauroctony relief (fig. 12.3). In the two reliefs, the god is represented in his habitual pose. With one knee, he leans on the bull's back, pulls back the head of the animal with his left hand, and plunges a dagger into its throat with his right hand. We also see the usual attendants: the raven, dog, snake, sun, and moon. The latter relief does have one unusual feature: on the right-hand side, the dedicant of the relief and several other figures are represented. It seems likely that they are members of the cult association. The custom of depicting the dedicant alongside a deity in a relief or painting is widespread in Palmyra and Dura-Europos. Depicted here with fellow members of the association rather than his family, the dedicant deviates from local custom and is typical of the organization of the Roman cult, in which family ties were unimportant;



Figure 12.3: Cult relief of Mithras slaying the bull (tauroctony), Mithraeum, ca. 170–171 CE. Limestone, 76 × 106 cm. Dura-Europos, Mithraeum, ca. 170–171 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.98

hence, a local iconographic motif is being adapted and reinterpreted in the light of a foreign cult. Palmyrene soldiers thus embraced religious practices widespread in the Roman army, but this did not preclude the continuation of local religious traditions. All over the Roman Empire, Palmyrene soldiers showed a preference for two typical Palmyrene deities: the gods Iarhibol and Malakbel.⁵⁶ This also holds true for Palmyrene soldiers stationed in Dura-Europos, amongst whom Iarhibol was particularly popular. Whereas Palmyrene merchants in Dura-Europos favored the city god Bel and his associates, soldiers opt for Iarhibol. In order to explain this shift, the role of Iarhibol in Palmyra will be first discussed.

Iarhibol's role in Palmyra was twofold.⁵⁷ First, he was worshipped as the tutelary deity of the Efca, the city's spring. As far as one can tell from the available evidence, this cult was not confined to a particular tribe, and touched upon the community as a whole. Second, Iarhibol was associated with Bel in the city temple. Whenever associated with Bel, he is depicted

as a sun-god. He owes his prominent position next to Bel to his role as tutelary deity of the Efca. Whether the god of the Efca was a sun-god as well is not known. There are no representations of this god from Palmyra: the only representation discovered thus far was dedicated by Palmyrene archers in Dura-Europos (fig. 12.4). It is unusual that this deity not only has a nimbus but also a crescent behind his shoulders. Be that as it may, the relief from Dura-Europos shows that the god, who was popular among the military, was first and foremost the god of the Efca and not the god worshipped as an acolyte of Bel.

The popularity of Iarhibol amongst soldiers is explained only partially by the situation in Palmyra. The emphasis on his solar aspect when worshipped in a military context has no counterpart in Palmyrene religion. On the other hand, there is evidence of the growing importance of a variety of solar deities within the Roman army from the second century CE onward. In all likelihood, this general tendency contributed to



Figure 12.4: Relief of Iarhibol, Temple of the Gadde, naos, ca. early 3rd century CE. Limestone, 54.5 × 25.0 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5301

the solarization of Iarhibol abroad. Initially, however, the choice was due to other motives. In the case of Iarhibol, the choice is at least partly explained by his function as a municipal deity at the Efca.⁵⁸ It is clear, however, that the later stress on his solar aspect is to be understood in light of the Roman army. The prominent position of Iarhibol among Palmyrene soldiers in Dura-Europos is exemplified most clearly in a painting from the pronaos of the so-called Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, which depicts the tribune Julius Terentius and his men performing a sacrifice to three statues of Palmyrene deities (pl. 37).⁵⁹ A Greek funeral inscription found in one of the domestic buildings states that Julius Terentius was tribune of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* and fell in battle in 239 CE.⁶⁰ It seems likely that the painting was made before the tribune's death in the fourth decade of the third century. In the painting, Iarhibol is represented in the center, with Aglibol to his right and Arsu to his left; hence, Iarhibol has taken the prominent position previously taken by Bel. Scholars have been puzzled that the sacrifice in the painting of Julius Terentius is performed by a high-ranking Roman officer and attended by a Roman cohort and its standard bearer. The *Feriale* of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* suggests that local gods were worshipped only privately in the army. The painting of Julius Terentius shows that the calendar recognized only some of the religions practiced by the enlisted soldiers. The theory that local deities were officially worshipped in the Roman army is substantiated by two more instances of high-officers and standard bearers paying homage to Palmyrene deities inside the camp. One of the rooms of the military clerical office yielded a third-century ink drawing of a military god identified by the accompanying inscription as the Palmyrene god Iarhibol (fig. 12.5).⁶¹ The sacrificant on the left-hand side wears the usual uniform of a Roman officer: a long-sleeved tunic with fringes, a *chlamys*, and boots. He is strikingly similar to the figure of Julius Terentius in the painting. A second sacrificant, on the right-hand side of the drawing, is identified by the accompanying inscription as a standard bearer. The second example is a small altar that a tribune dedicated to Iarhibol in the temple of the Palmyrene gods in the third century CE (pl. 38).⁶²

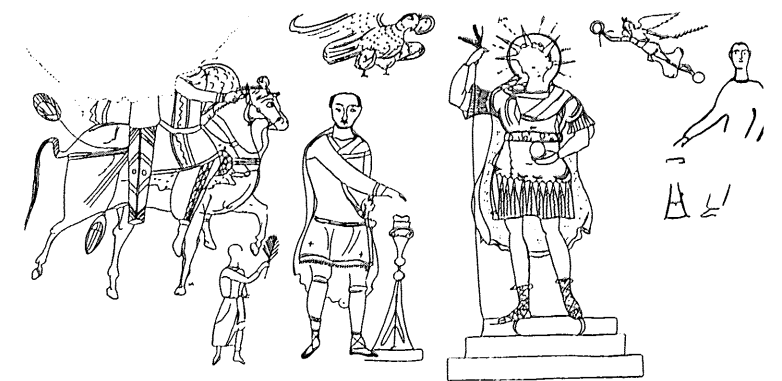


Figure 12.5: Tracing of drawing of Iarhibol, Temple of the Gadde, naos, ca. 256 CE. Ink on limestone, 54.5 × 25.0 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1208. After *Prelim. Rep.* V, pl. XXXVI.3

It does not follow from Iarhibol's popularity among soldiers that his cult replaced that of Bel in Dura-Europos. Contemporary with the sacrifice of Julius Terentius is the so-called Otes fresco that was found in one of the assembly rooms in the same temple.⁶³ It pictures a certain Otes, the founder of the room, with the *bouleutès* (councilor) Iabsumsos, sacrificing before five Palmyrene gods. Iabsumsos was a member of the city council, which was only installed in Dura-Europos in the third century CE. Clearly, both Otes and Iabsumsos were civilians. This accords well with the painting, where Bel occupies his traditional central position. In the religion of non-soldiers, therefore, Bel preserved his eminent position. Iarhibol's precedence over Bel is characteristic of the religion of Palmyrene soldiers.

The importance of solar deities in the army probably explains the presence of the bust of the sun god in the relief bearing a Greek-Palmyrene dedicatory inscription that represents a certain Julius Aurelius Malochas, the son of Soudaios the Palmyrene, performing a sacrifice for the goddess Nemesis (pl. 4). The relief was made in Palmyra and is dated to 244 CE.⁶⁴ Although the dedicant does not wear military clothing, it is probable that he was somehow connected to the Roman army. His name is common among Palmyrene soldiers stationed in Dura-Europos and the relief was found at the main gate, an area where the majority of the monuments can be ascribed to soldiers. The iconography of Nemesis follows her usual Greco-Roman iconography. The goddess is clad in a long chiton and an himation, which covers her head and upper body. With the now missing right hand, she pulled away her garment such as to expose her breast in order to spit on it; an apotropaic gesture frequently found in representations of Nemesis. Above her shoulder are traces of a narrow rectangular object; probably a rod or rudder which the goddess originally held in her left hand. On the ground to her left, a small griffin is depicted standing in profile. Its forepaws rest on a wheel. Contrary to her usual representation in the Greco-Roman world, however, the goddess is associated in this relief with a sun god. This novelty is probably the effect of the cult of Nemesis in Palmyra. In Palmyra, Nemesis was most likely identified with the Arab goddess Allat. Allat was worshipped in her sanctuary with the Arab sun-god Shamash. The popularity of solar deities among the military probably enforced this Palmyrene association of Nemesis-Allat with the sun god and resulted in the presence of the sun god in the Durene relief.

Summary and Conclusion

We conclude from the above that Palmyra did not exercise a profound influence on the religion of Dura-Europos. It is true that Palmyrene deities figure prominently in the written records from the city; but as far as we can tell, their cult largely is confined to people from Palmyra and was seldom adopted by Dura's local population. A comparison between the religion of Palmyrene merchants and Palmyrene soldiers shows that the religious preferences of these two groups differed. It is apparent, therefore, that social circumstances to a large extent determined the religion of Palmyrene expatriates. Neither the religion of the tradesmen nor that of the soldiers simply copies the religion in Palmyra.

In the case of merchants, tribal religion becomes far less important outside Palmyra. Their choice of Bel testifies to their search for a communal religious identity. Immigrants from Anath and Hatra also opted for their communal deities outside their native city. At the same time, we should bear in mind the possibility that foreign visitors paid homage to the gods of their new environment. It is clear from the respect that the

Palmyrenes paid to the Gad of Dura that this was indeed the case. It is likely that this close co-operation drew individual Palmyrene merchants and other strangers to join local cult groups as well. Precisely because they became integrated into their new surroundings, such instances are bound to escape our notice. Palmyrenes may well have participated in the cults of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin and Aphlad, but this must remain hypothetical. One should be wary of overemphasizing the religious conservatism of Palmyrene merchants, since the nature of the sources may distort our reconstruction.

The religion of Palmyrene soldiers is more noticeably influenced by their new setting. The reason for this is twofold: First, soldiers maintained much less contact with their native cities. Second, the Roman army actively promoted solidarity and a communal identity. As a consequence, Palmyrene soldiers tended to assimilate to their new surroundings. They either accepted the religion of the army or modified local religious traditions according to the fashions of their new environment.

Notes

The present article is largely based on my doctoral thesis that was completed in 1999 and was published in the same year by Brill in Leiden as *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: a Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria*. In preparing this thesis, I had the immense pleasure to work in the Dura archive of the Yale University Art Gallery for over a month in 1993. I have fond memories of these days, and I am particularly grateful to Dr. Susan Matheson for all her assistance and patience during my stay and in the years that followed. It is with great pleasure that I now present YUAG with the results of my research from those days.

- 1 For an indispensable discussion of the architecture of these shrines, with references to previous publications, see Susan B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture. Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 76–124. It should be stressed that the names conventionally given to these buildings do not necessarily refer to the tutelary deity of the sanctuary. For this reason, I refer to these names as “so-called.”
- 2 The study of religious life in Dura is still in its infancy. A fifteen-page article by C. Bradford Welles, published in 1969, is still the most complete overview of the religious history of Dura: C. Bradford Welles, “The Gods of Dura-Europos,” in *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben: Festschrift für Franz Altheim zum 6.10.1968*, ed. Ruth Altheim-Stiehl and Hans Erich Stier (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 50–65. The present author has published a book on the religion of the Palmyrene community of Dura-Europos and an article on the presumed competition between the various cults in the city: Dirven, *Palmyrenes*; Lucinda Dirven, “Religious Competition and the Decoration of Sanctuaries: the Case of Dura Europos,” *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): 1–20. At present, Ted Kaizer

is working on a monograph on religious life in Dura. He has published several articles on the subject: Ted Kaizer, “Patterns of Worship in Dura-Europos: a Case-study of Religious Life in the Classical Levant Outside the Main Centres,” in *Les religions orientales dans le monde Grec et Romain: Cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006)*, ed. Christine Bonnet, Vivienne Pirenne-Delforge, and Danny Praet (Brussels: Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 2009), 153–71; Ted Kaizer, “Religion and Language in Dura-Europos,” in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, and Jonathan J. Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 235–53.

- 3 On the population of Dura, see C. Bradford Welles, “The Population of Roman Dura,” in *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allan Chester Johnson*, ed. Paul R. Coleman-Norton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 251–74.
- 4 On Palmyra and the caravan trade, see Gary K. Young, *Rome’s Eastern Trade. International Commerce and Imperial Policy 31 BC–AD 305* (London: Routledge, 2001), 136–86.
- 5 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956); George D. Kilpatrick, “Dura-Europos: the Parchments and Papyri,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 5 (1964): 215–25, esp. 219–20; and Richard N. Frye, ed., *The Parthian and Middle Persian Inscriptions of Dura-Europos* (London: Lund, Humphries, 1968).
- 6 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). On the importance of the kind

of Christianity in Dura for the interpretation of the paintings, see Lucinda Dirven, “Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: the Meaning of Adam and Eve in the Baptistry of Dura-Europos,” *Eastern Christian Art* 5 (2008): 43–57.

- 7 Admittedly, these factors do not guarantee the origin of a particular individual or group; however, the more of the above mentioned elements concur, the more likely the postulated origin becomes.
- 8 *Prelim. Rep. II*, 90–91, fig. 3.
- 9 On the cult of Iarhibol, compare below, note 57.
- 10 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, for an extensive discussion of the Palmyrene material found in Dura-Europos.
- 11 Lucinda Dirven, “The Palmyrene Diaspora in East and West: a Syrian Community in the Diaspora in the Roman Period,” in *Strangers and Sojourners. Religious Communities in the Diaspora*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 77–94.
- 12 Below, note 16.
- 13 Roberto Bertolino, “Les inscriptions Hatréennes de Doura-Europos: Étude épigraphique,” in *Doura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 199–206.
- 14 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 112, no. 416.
- 15 In a previous publication, Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 5, n17, I have argued that the community consisted exclusively of people from Anath, cf. also Klaas Dijkstra, *Life and Loyalty: a Study in the Socio-religious Culture of Syria and Mesopotamia in the Graeco-Roman Period Based on Epigraphic Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1995),

265–66. In his review of my book in *Topoi* 10, no. 2 (2000): 517–26, Jean-Baptiste Yon rightly questions this assumption, arguing that several of the names are also attested in Palmyra. Ted Kaizer, “Religion and Language,” 162–63, argues that the description of the origin of the god proves he was not worshipped only by people from Anath, since they knew where the god came from. In my view, the stress on the god’s origin functions as an identity marker for the group from Anath. This formulation is well known in the Roman Near East and it does not follow from this that people from other places worshipped the god as well.

- 16 On the clientele of the temple of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 115–17.
- 17 *Prelim. Rep. VII–VIII*, 307–9, no. 915 b–c (Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 212–18). For a bilingual Greek-Palmyrene inscription dated to the Roman period, see below, note 64. In this case, the dedicant’s role in the army probably explains his use of Greek: Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 327–31, pl. XVI.
- 18 On the relationship between Greek and Palmyrene in inscriptions from Palmyra, see Jean Cantineau, *Grammaire du Palmyrénien épigraphique* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1935), 5.
- 19 For a historical outline of the cult of Baalshamin, see Wolfgang Röllig, “Baal-Shamem,” in *Dictionary and Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 149–51.
- 20 Susan B. Downey, *The Stone and Plaster Sculpture: the Excavations of Dura-Europos. Final Report 3, Part 1, Fascicle 2* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 239–42. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 211–12, pl. II.
- 21 Bertolino, “Étude épigraphique,” 199–206.

- 22 Lucian describes the statues in *De Dea Syria* pars. 30–33. Cf. Lucian of Samosata, *Lucian: on the Syrian Goddess*, ed. and trans., Jane L. Lightfoot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 269–71.
- 23 From the so-called fifth shrine in Hatra comes a statue that tallies with Macrobius' description of the cult statue of the god Apollo-Nabu in Hierapolis: Lucian, 460–61.
- 24 Above, note 15. In addition to this text, three Hatraean graffiti were found in Dura. It follows that the group of people from Hatra who settled in Dura or visited the city was probably small. The bilingual inscription was found buried in a cistern in the court of the temple: Pierre Leriche and Roberto Bertolino, "Les inscriptions hatréennes de Doura-Europos: le Contexte archéologique et historique," in *Doura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 210–12. It may be inferred from the remains of the temple façade found together with the inscription in the temple, that it predates the earthquake of 160 CE.
- 25 Jean-Baptiste Yon, in his review of my book on the Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos in *Topoi* 10, no. 2 (2000): 524–25, rejects the mercantile activities of the Palmyrenes, arguing that there is no firm proof. In my view, the circumstantial evidence listed above does suggest this was the case for at least a significant part of this community.
- 26 Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 447–48. See now also Jean-Baptiste Yon, "Commerçants et petits commerçants sur les bords de l'Euphrate," in *Productions et échanges dans la Syrie grecque et romaine: Actes du colloque de Tours, Juin 2003*, ed. Maurice Sartre (Paris: De Boccard, 2007), 413–28.
- 27 On the Palmyrene caravan trade, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 19–22, with references for further reading.
- 28 On Palmyra's economic relations with Dura, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 34–40. On the route of the Palmyrene caravans and the role of the Euphrates River, see Michael Gawlikowski, "La commerce de Palmyre sur terre et sur eau," in *L'Arabie et ses mers bordières, I: Itinéraires et voisinages. Séminaire de recherche 1985–1986*, ed. Jean-François Salles, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient 16 (Paris: De Boccard, 1988): 163–72. On the marginal role of the caravan trade in Dura-Europos, see now Kai Rufing, "Dura-Europos und seine Rolle im Fernhandel der Römischen Kaiserzeit," in *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt. Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts*, ed. Robert Rollinger, Birgot Gugler, Martin Lang, and Irene Madreiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 151–60.
- 29 In the past, it was frequently suggested that Palmyrenes had already been stationed in Dura-Europos during the Parthian period, charged with the protection of the caravans. This is unlikely. First, because Dura-Europos never was an important post on the route of the Palmyrene caravans (cf. the previous note) and second, because Palmyra was a Roman city at this time; it is extremely unlikely that the Parthians would have allowed a militia from a hostile city to settle in Dura-Europos. For further references, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 34n133.
- 30 On the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* in general, see David L. Kennedy, "The *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* at Dura Europos," in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. Edward Dabrowa (Krakow: Universite Jagellane, 1994), 89–98.
- 31 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 320, no. 917 (= Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 210).

- 32 *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 167–69 (= Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 281–93).
- 33 For a summary of the history of this temple and references for further reading, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 293–95.
- 34 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 319–22, nos. 916–18. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 199–207.
- 35 Delbert R. Hillers and Eleonara Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), no. 1067.
- 36 See the extensive discussion of this inscription and its implications for the reconstruction of religion in Palmyra in Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 41–66.
- 37 On religion in Palmyra, see recently Ted Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002).
- 38 Hillers and Cussini, no. 1347 (45 CE).
- 39 *Ibid.*, nos. 1353 and 0269.
- 40 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 47–51.
- 41 Dirven, "The Palmyrene Diaspora," 88. On the Palmyrene community in Rome, see Eugenia Equini-Schneider, "Il santuario di Bel e delle divinità di Palmira: comunità e tradizioni religiose dei palmireni a Roma," *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 5, no. 1 (1987): 69–85.
- 42 Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72–74.
- 43 The two Gadde were not the main deities worshipped in this temple. In the naos, the remains of another, larger cult relief were found that probably represented the tutelary deity of the temple.
- 44 Ted Kaizer, "De Dea Syria et aliis diis deabusque: a Study of the Variety of Appearances of Gad in Aramaic Inscriptions and on Sculptures from the Near East in the First Three Centuries CE (Part 1)," *Orientalia lovaniensia Periodica* 28 (1997): 147–66; and Kaizer, "De Dea Syria et aliis diis deabusque. A Study of the Variety of Appearances of Gad in Aramaic Inscriptions and on Sculptures from the Near East in the First Three Centuries AD (Part 2)," *Orientalia lovaniensia Periodica* 29 (1998): 33–62.
- 45 Rolf Stucky, "Prêtres syrien I. Palmyre," *Syria* 50 (1973): 163–80, esp. 176.
- 46 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 70–71, 109–10.
- 47 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 111–13.
- 48 For a stylistic analysis of Durene sculpture, see Downey, *The Stone and Plaster Sculpture*, 227–76.
- 49 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 112–13, no. 416.
- 50 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 106f and pl. XIII; and Louis Robert, *Hellenica: Recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques, d'Aphrodisias à la Lycaonie, compte rendu du volume VIII des Monuments Asiae Minoris Antiqua* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1965), 13:120 with note 4.
- 51 Above, note 14.
- 52 On Hatra as a city sacred to Shamash, see Lucinda Dirven, "Hatra: a 'Pre-Islamic Mecca' in the Eastern Jazirah," *ARAM* 18–19 (2006–7): 363–80. On the religious organisation of Hatra, see Ted Kaizer, "Some Remarks on the Religious Life of Hatra," *Topoi* 10 (2000): 229–52.

- 53 A comprehensive study dealing with the religious behavior of Palmyrene troops has not been published to date. For an overview and references for further reading, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 181–83.
- 54 On the *Feriale*, see C. Bradford Welles, Robert O. Fink, and J. Frank Gilliam, eds., *The Parchments and Papyri. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report Volume 5, Part 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), no. 54; Robert O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve for The American Philological Association, 1971), no. 117; and, most recently, M. Barbara Reeves, “The ‘Feriale Duranum,’ Roman Military Religion and Dura-Europos: a Reassessment” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, University Microfilms International, 2005). The latter study argues that the calendar was a local document that was not used by the entire Roman army. The arguments failed to convince the present author.
- 55 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 112ff.; Franz Cumont, “The Dura Mithraeum,” in *Mithraic Studies. Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Manchester: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 1:151–214; and Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 260–72, for a description of the monuments from the early Mithraeum and references for further reading.
- 56 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 157–89.
- 57 On the cult of Iarhibol in Palmyra, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 47–57, with references for further reading.
- 58 The popularity of Malakbel, the second Palmyrene god who was much worshipped by the military, is far more difficult to explain. Whereas Iarhibol was an important god at the Efca and functioned as the attendant

of Bel in the city temple, Malakbel seems to have been relatively unimportant. In Palmyra, Malakbel seldom figures alone and is frequently inferior to his associates. For the military, Malakbel is first and foremost a solar deity; in Palmyra, however, his solar aspect is of secondary importance. Thus compared to the Palmyrene evidence, we also note a shift in Malakbel’s personality abroad.

- 59 The identity of the three figures on the pedestal has been the subject of a lively debate. For an overview of this discussion and the arguments in favor of their identification as gods, see Lucinda Dirven, “The Julius Terentius Fresco and the Roman Imperial Cult,” *Mediterraneo Antico* 10, nos. 1–2 (2007) [2010]: 1–13.
- 60 *Prelim. Rep. IX*, 1, 176–85.
- 61 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 153–56. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 316–18, with references for further reading.
- 62 *Prelim. Rep. II*, 90–91, fig. 3 (Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 314n58).
- 63 Franz Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1926), 122–34, fig. 26, pls. LV–LVIII (Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 295–302, pl. XII, with references for further reading). Unfortunately, this painting is no longer extant.
- 64 Following the collated reading proposed by Hillers and Cussini, no. 1078. Cf. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 327–31, pl. XVI.

MAURA K. HEYN

THE TERENCE FRIEZE IN CONTEXT

As the sun set on James Henry Breasted’s single day of field work at Dura-Europos in 1920, he and his team stood in front of the north wall of the pronaos of the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods. Although paintings covered the entire extant wall, they had only one film plate left and chose to photograph the painting of Julius Terentius with his troops, on the right hand side of the wall (pl. 37).¹ When Franz Cumont returned in the season of 1922 through 1923, he re-exposed the decoration on the north wall, took pictures, made illustrations, and noted graffiti.² Cumont also had a protective wall built in front of the paintings.³ This wall was dismantled eight years later, when most of the paintings adorning the temple were removed and transported to the National Museum in Damascus and the Yale University Art Gallery.⁴ Although scholars who work at Dura-Europos know when the paintings were removed and, generally, where they went, the current location of the remainder of the north wall of the pronaos is a mystery. In his description of the removal process, field director Maurice Pillet mentions only three in particular: the painting of Terentius; the painting of Lysias, Apollodorus, and Zenodotus on the south wall of the pronaos; and the painting of Conon and his family on the south wall of the naos.⁵ It is certain, however, that other paintings were removed and transported that day, for the mythological scene on the east wall of the pronaos went to Yale along with the Terentius painting.⁶ The remainder of the north wall has not resurfaced and its disappearance has contributed to the trend that began on that fateful day in 1920, with the painting of Terentius and his troops being studied as an independent tableau.⁷ The purpose of this essay is to place the painting back into its artistic context in order to understand better the function of mural adornment in the temple.

The Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, also known as the Temple of Bel,

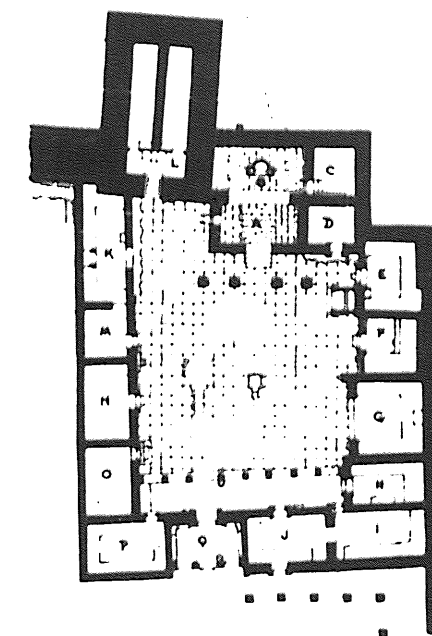


Figure 13.1: Plan showing location of naos (A), pronaos (B), and Room K, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods. After Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, fig. 47